



THE LOST
BLESSING

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THE LOST BLESSING.

A. M. Miley -

The Lost Blessing.



BY

ANNA SHIPTON,

AUTHOR OF

"THE SECRET OF THE LORD;" "THE BROOK IN THE WAY;"

"WAYSIDE SERVICE;" "WHISPERS IN THE PALMS;"

"FOOTSTEPS OF THE FLOCK;" "TELL JESUS;"

ETC., ETC.

"I am the Almighty God ; walk before Me, and be thou perfect."

Genesis xvii. 1.

LONDON:

MORGAN, CHASE, AND SCOTT.

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TO
THE WONDERFUL, COUNSELLOR,
THE MIGHTY GOD,
THE EVERLASTING FATHER, THE PRINCE OF PEACE;

To the Hand of Him Mighty to Save;

COMMIT THIS TESTIMONY OF HIS LOVE AND
FAITHFULNESS,

PRAYING HIM TO POUR HIS BLESSING UPON IT,
THAT IT MAY BRING FORTH FRUIT TO THE
GLORY OF HIM WHOSE KINGDOM IS
NOT OF THIS WORLD.

A. S.





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THE LOST BLESSING.

CHAPTER I.

THE LAND OF PROMISE.

“Lead me into the land of uprightness. Quicken me, O Lord, for Thy name’s sake.—PSALM cxliii. 10, 11.

THESE pages have not been written to discuss whether there be another position than that ordinarily accepted by saved souls. It is assumed that there is. They contain a simple testimony to the faithfulness of God, to encourage the children of Israel who have not believed the good report of the land that lies before them, and to stimulate the weary pilgrim who with hopeless self-effort is “discouraged because of the way.”

The life of faith in the Son of God which Paul sets before us by the revelation of God Himself, is no new doctrine. Although it has received many

appellations, it is nothing more nor less than eternal life, begun here and lived by the faithful in all ages. Therefore, let us "lay hold of eternal life."

The great Cloud of Witnesses presented the fruit of this faith, testifying their belief in the promises of God by their obedience to His commands.

Granted that they lived under another dispensation, that does not exempt us from the same simplicity of faith. Surely we live under higher obligations, for we have seen, and heard, and handled the Word of Life, which they received only in type and shadow. "Blessed are ye who have not seen, and yet have believed." The mysteries of early Hebrew worship, performed in obedience to the law of the Lord, called for unqualified reception. The Pillar, the Cloud, the Vail, the Shekinah, the Altar, and the various accompaniments of the Tabernacle, were esteemed as symbols of things in heaven, and accepted as the expression of the hidden wisdom of God.

The Paschal Lamb was still a mystery. The Lamb of God, who laid down His sinless life to bring us near the Father, was still enshrouded in the vail of ages. Though we now know that He was the Angel of the Covenant who led His chosen people through the wilderness, and Captain of the

Lord's host, their strength and defence, yet it was only when the vail was rent that in those impersonations could be recognized the Son of God, the Saviour, who in the fulness of time came forth from the Bosom of the Father, to suffer for the offences of the sinner, and to rise again for his justification.

Patriarch and Prophet had received but passing visitations from the Holy One, until Jehovah, manifested in Jesus, revealed His unchangeable love to the children of God in the gift of the Comforter. Herein is the law of love. "If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." And again, "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." (John xiv. 21, 23.) Thus "love is the fulfilling of the law."

For example: Abraham left his country, his kindred, and his father's house, at the command of the Lord, and the Lord was with him and blessed him. After this God said unto him, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering." Abraham obeyed, and God renewed and enlarged His

promise. The second covenant is made the witness of God's approval, for "faith without works is dead." The faith of Abraham wrought out obedience, obedience claimed the promise, and thus he became partaker of the Blessing. He leaves his country, his kindred, and his father's house, and he is given another country extending beyond the bound of sight. He lays upon the altar his son, his only son Isaac, whom he loves, his sole hope of seed, and the promise is confirmed that his seed shall be multiplied as the stars of the heaven, and the sand on the sea shore, "*because thou hast obeyed my voice.*"

Much experience of the Lord's faithfulness and goodness, and many a failure on the part of Abraham, preceded his position as "the Friend of God."

It was not simply a revelation that the Lord vouchsafed him when He said, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" When He disclosed to him the coming judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah, it was giving His servant to realize his power with the Judge of the whole earth, and the favour He bore towards him. It was bringing him into the place of communion.

We walk by faith, not by sight. We surely are not at a greater distance from the Father of our

Lord Jesus Christ than Abraham was ; not farther from the Lord of life and glory, for we have a Brother upon our Father's throne.

That Faithful One, who had promised to bless the seed of His servant, is not forgetful of the son whom he had not withheld from his God. "And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac."

Thus the strong rock on which faith takes her stand is the faithfulness of a covenant God. "Know ye, therefore, that they which are of faith, the same *are* the children of Abraham;" and "they that be of faith are blessed *with* faithful Abraham."

We have many witnesses to the fact of justification by faith ; there are comparatively few who witness for the *life of faith* which should spring from the root of this assurance.

The mere theoretical knowledge of a doctrine, however intellectually received and accurately defined for the instruction of others, is still but barren, unless it take root in the heart, and by the quickening Spirit become an active principle of spiritual life. It is not the logical discourse, the eloquent sermon, but it is the fruit of the truth produced in him who witnesses of it, and in those who have received his testimony, by which God is glorified.

When Whitfield startled a Laodicean church with the same truth that Luther burst his prison-house to proclaim, the Wesleys almost simultaneously preached the way of Holiness, not inaptly designated by them "the Second Blessing."

Justification by faith, and the necessity of the new birth, were met by the world with a fiercer antagonism than the setting forth of the holy life; while, strange to say, many enrolled under the name of Christians opposed the preaching of this as altogether visionary.

Doubtless Satan foresees that the infant of days will become a soldier, and the soldier a veteran; and the great enemy fears the foot of the conqueror on the land which is promised to every child that shall tread it.

The Accuser will contend, but there is a mightier than he. It is not with the slothful, the careless, the carnal, that Satan wars, but with those who desire possession of the better country, and like Caleb produce the fruit and declare the goodness of the land.

Every truth must be tried in the fire (Heb. x. 33), and "Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God ye might receive the promise."

When in 1857-60 the work of the Holy Spirit

was visibly manifested in America, Ireland, Scotland, and England, the revival was signalized by less individual ministry and more rapid growth than had been seen since the days of Pentecost. The power of the Spirit, so little sought and expected, was exhibited in miracles of grace; the Lord thus reviving the hearts of His contrite ones, and rejoicing His praying people, with a display of His might, leading sinners to the source of life, and startling the formalist from the emptiness of his profession to trust in the living God.

There was a Satanic imitation of the work of the Spirit, as there always has been from the time of Jannes and Jambres, in the days of Moses (Ex. vii. 11; viii. 7), and as there was in the ministry of the apostles. (Acts xix. 13). This we are forewarned to expect, but by their fruit shall the tree be known. Such shall not "*dwell in the Lord's land.*" (Hosea ix. 3.) The imitation of conversion has in no way detracted from the fact of justification by faith; neither can failure in the way of holiness disprove the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

Conversion may appear in one instantaneously, while in another there is a gradual, almost imperceptible, turning from darkness to light; and whether Holiness is received by one or by repeated acts of faith, need not stumble any one whose

desire is to walk with God in uprightness and sincerity. Therefore, in place of spending our time in striving to unravel the mysteries of grace, let us meekly accept our common privilege of experimentally shewing forth the power of the life of Christ through the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit.

If we separate the abiding in Christ from the first reception of Him, and regard the life of faith in the Son of God as a thing of doubtful attainment, why not reject the unquestionable deliverance of the soul from death, seeing that it was for a holy life that the soul was redeemed? (Titus ii. 14.) How otherwise is the new creature in Christ Jesus to be filled with the Spirit, with the "knowledge of the will of God, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding"?

A life of faith and love, which is the way of holiness, is preached. The world takes little umbrage at this; it is foolishness to the natural man; he has no desire after it, and its attainment would be impracticable however counterfeited. The human heart, unsanctified by the presence of the Holy One, may at any time become a temple of money-changers, a den of thieves, a market of fraud; however disguised, its choice is a murderer, a robber, and at the claims of the Son of God, the King of Israel, there is heard a cry as of old,

“Not this man, but Barabbas.” “Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; for they have no delight in it.” (Jer. vi. 10.)

But shall those who have received Jesus as their Saviour from eternal death hesitate to receive Him as the Saviour from sin? Yet some are offended, and some are alarmed, at the preaching of holiness.

And what is the way of holiness? It is communion with the Father and the Son, proceeding from the Spirit of Grace, who is the fruit of the life and sacrifice of Christ. This life in the soul needs daily and hourly feeding, like the fire of the altar. “The fire shall ever be burning on the altar, it shall never go out.” (Lev. vi. 13.)

What is the expressed condition on which this blessing is suspended? To walk before Him in simplicity and godly sincerity, and not with fleshly wisdom. (2 Cor. i. 12.)

“All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth.” Therefore it is simply taking the Lord at His word, and, having believed in Him for salvation from eternal death, trusting Him to keep that which He has redeemed, and entering into fellowship with the Father and the Son.

The Wesleys set forth Holiness of life as the

object of salvation, and if some mistakes subsequently arose among their hearers, the errors grew from the lack of individual, prayerful study of the Word of God. Now as then, there is a danger of setting forth a doctrine, rather than that life in Christ which is the living exponent of it.

Each separate soul requires the peculiar application of the Holy Spirit's teaching, and the manifestation of the Spirit differs equally with the testimony to which the soul is called.

The Fletchers of Madeley wrote and preached of this life of faith, and, better than all, lived it! Rutherford's Letters teem with it in every line, unconscious that the south wind breathing o'er the bed of spices is fragrant with the breath of the Beloved! Madame Guyon and Fenelon witnessed for it in life and teaching, enduring prison, persecution, and defamation, the tribulation promised to those who will live godly in Christ Jesus.

William Lamb, of Huddersfield, whose brief life and letters* left a record of burning thoughts and aspirations for the fullest reception of the blessing, has roused many a doubting heart to consider if that divine intimacy accorded to him was shut out

* "Christ our Life, and Living by Faith. Life and Letters of the late William Lamb."—Morgan, Chase, and Scott.

from themselves. Hewitson, without forcing the doctrine, preaches it in his life. Ruth Bryan, one of the hidden ones of God, shews forth in her letters and diaries the fellowship she enjoyed with Him in her suffering and solitary existence.

And many others, known and unknown to me, in the body and out of the body, shew forth how real a thing it is to know Christ. Such are united to me in tenderest sympathy, and that sympathy had its source and continuance in the felt union and communion with the Lord. For to walk with Jesus is to tread the way of Holiness.

When the Holy Spirit had revealed to me my deliverance from death, I concluded that it was not for me to tarry on the shore of the Red Sea, which I had left behind me after I came out of Egypt. I desired to go forward and *know* my Deliverer. And though I was often in bondage by reason of false teachers, my heart-cry was for Jesus Himself.

I would have spent my days in seeking for and listening to preachers and teachers, but I was seldom able to quit the prison-house of sickness and suffering which the Lord had appointed me.

My unsatisfied longings were to be wrought out in God's own way and time. Amid much misapprehension and distrust from fellow-believers, I

trod the rough way alone, learning, not from others' opinions, but experimentally from the word of the Lord: "He that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land and inherit my holy mountain." (Is. lvii. 13.)

I had gone to Him just as I was to be saved, and after many a sore wound and sorrowful trial, through the presumption of thinking I could do anything acceptable to Him of myself, I felt that I must go to Him still, just as I was, for fuller revelation of Himself. How this was to be accomplished, and all it comprehended, I had yet to learn. For those who would know Christ in resurrection power must sooner or later learn something of the fellowship of His sufferings. (Phil. iii. 10.)

I knew that I was a child of God. I desired to live for Him, follow Him, walk with Him, to the full power of the soul that He had redeemed. The seasons of near and gracious communion which were occasionally vouchsafed me were as strong wine to the hope ready to perish. This, I thought, ought to be the habitual condition of the believer, and I desired to know how it was attainable for every-day life.

I think if any one had then presented Perfection to me as a *doctrine* only, I should have sunk down

hopeless before it. God had given me grace to take Him at His word for salvation, and I now lacked faith to believe that He would not only keep that which I had committed to Him, but that He would enable me with full purpose of heart to cleave unto Him.

It is with deep tenderness my heart goes forth towards those who are halting between two opinions—afraid or ashamed to lay claim to a life *in* Christ as well as life from Him.

It is not presumption to believe that Christ died that I might live. Was it for us to live the life of the old nature that the Son of God became man? Was it to reveal to us a life of sense that He suffered and died? It was a new life He came from heaven to bestow upon us, a life of faith, and an enduring inheritance in possession.

The title to the land is to have been redeemed by the blood of Christ. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." But does this comprehend only our deliverance from eternal death, and security against God's just demands upon us for the long catalogue of His broken laws? Nay, the end of salvation is to reconcile the sinner to the God from whom he is estranged, and bring Him into the position of the son in the Father's house.

By the same faith by which Christ is received as the Saviour from eternal death, He is accepted as the Saviour who can alone deliver the soul from every evil work, and preserve it unto His heavenly kingdom. "They shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." (Matt. i. 21; 1 Thess. iv. 3; John vii. 17.)

We love most deeply that which we love most intelligently. The Lord knoweth them that are His, but many of His own have very little knowledge of Him, and seem afraid to know more.

The assurance that "in me dwelleth no good thing," takes me in my helplessness to Him who has covenanted to withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly; therefore I confide my need to Him who "giveth liberally and upbraideth not," and my greatest need is the continually realized fellowship of my Lord and Saviour, which can only flow from the abiding Spirit.

There is scarcely a term for salvation from eternal death that cannot be applied to the hourly salvation from sin of those to whom Christ is the special Saviour: "The living God, the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe." (1 Tim. iv. 10.)

You could not save yourself from hell, neither can you save yourself from the sin that doth so easily beset you. All must spring from Him who is alike "the Author and the Finisher of our faith."

Salvation, as it is set forth in the Epistles to the churches, was certainly not primarily addressed to the unsaved, but for the perfecting of the Body of which Christ is the Head. Yet these exhortations are often exclusively offered to those who are not partakers of the like precious faith, as if they were not applicable to the members of Christ.

Peter in his Epistle to the elect strangers scattered through Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bythinia, enumerates their possessions in Christ, and after pointing them to their incorruptible inheritance, dwells on "the end" of their faith, even the salvation of their souls (1 Peter i. 9), and exhorts them to Holiness.

The warning at the close of the second Epistle is for the believer: "Beware lest ye, being led away by the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness," and the head-knowledge of false teachers he sets forth as one of the snares to be expected in the Church of God.

All these fences, so needful to the saints in the time of the Apostles, are surely more than ever

necessary in these latter days, when the devices of Satan to insinuate error and throw discord among brethren should lead us to walk closely with Him who can alone keep us from falling.

We must learn each man for himself what is meant by abiding in Christ ; that is, Christ dwelling in the heart by faith ; loved, obeyed, and followed in *perfect sincerity* and child-like trust ; with the eye open to see, and the ear circumcised to hear, what the Spirit of Promise reveals of Him. Even a sigh after a clearer apprehension of the Lord is the voice of the holy dove-like Guest interceding for the thirsting soul.

I knew no one in my early spiritual life who sympathised with my great need, and more than once I have been met with words to this effect : “ But you know you are saved. Is not that enough to make you happy ? ”

No ! It was not enough for me ! The purpose for which I was saved was dimly before me, and the manner of attaining it eluded my self-efforts.

But the Lord had promised me that my eyes should see my teachers (Is. xxx. 20), and one was waiting for me, though I was so slow and dull in understanding.

Death fell suddenly on a sweet promising child whom I loved. This event, from certain dis-

troubling circumstances connected with it, deeply affected me.

A few words in my journal mark the day: "The child of promise has left for the promised land." As I read the memorandum to-day there seemed an unconscious prophecy enfolded in it for myself. The day before the burial, which speedily followed, I awoke with an indescribable longing to look again upon the little one, so lately brightening my sick chamber with her smiles and pretty ways, and lisping her happy hymn by my side.

I was slowly recovering from a lengthened illness, and it seemed more natural to reserve my renewed strength for the living, and avoid a scene which would only distress me. I could not see any ultimate advantage to be derived from what seemed the gratification of a morbid feeling; while I shrank from the pang which I knew would be the result. Yet I still desired to go.

Judging myself, and oppressed by conflicting feelings, I prayed for the impression to be removed; but it deepened, and I felt I must go, and that at once.

A faint hope rose in my mind that some one might be there whom I might point from the grave to the Lord of Life, or that I might see the children of the family, and speak to them of

that Good Shepherd who had folded the tender lamb in the land of living waters ; but I had nothing definite before me, only the desire to look upon the dead.

My natural mind was still combating my spirit, even while I had the witness in my heart that God was leading me.

The sun shone bright and clear, and sparkled on the first sharp frost of Autumn ; the ground was dry and crisp beneath my feet, the sky was blue and cloudless ; all seemed gladsome, but my heavy heart. As I set forth to take my last look at the dear face I should behold no more until the dawn of the morning without clouds, I walked to the carriage-stand. There was but one in the neighbourhood, and that was at a little distance from my lodgings. When I reached it, there was only one coachman there, who demanded as his fare nearly double the sum I had brought with me, to convey me to my destination. He endeavoured to persuade me that the distance was considerably beyond that indicated to me.

Outwardly this appeared a token that I should return, but after some conflict I considered that the object for which I had prayed lay still unattained, and that therefore circumstances ought not to deter me. Vainly I considered ; no expedient came to

my mind. It appeared that I must walk as I best could, and trust to some means of conveyance on the road for my return.

On enquiry I found that there was a by-road, which made a shorter route to the place I sought, and receiving my directions to follow it, I went on my way.

I reached the house where the angel of death had carried the youngest and fairest from the home circle. There was more to sadden me in the living than the sight of the pale placid face and shrouded form laid in its little white coffin.

The children of the family hung about me, and listened lovingly and tearfully to my words, as I spoke to them of the Saviour of little children.

I was very weary, and would gladly have prolonged my visit, but I was not invited. I set forth again, understanding better the wisdom and tender love of this sudden and hitherto mysterious dispensation.

As it was a by-road I watched in vain for a vehicle of any description to help me on my way ; only one passed me, and the driver took no heed of my weak voice.

I remembered that leading out of the direct route was a pleasant seat, sheltered by the trunks of some old lime trees, which, if I could reach

them, would afford me rest until I were able to proceed.

I approached the spot, and found it occupied by a rough-looking wayfaring man, whom at first sight I mistook for a beggar. As I drew nearer I perceived that he had an open book by his side, which he closed abruptly at my approach, as if my presence there had disturbed him. I paused in some uncertainty whether I should proceed, for he turned towards me, and appeared to regard me sternly. It was not really so. His pallid face was drawn with paralysis, and one arm hung helplessly by his side. Lines of thought, and care, and pain, which were graven on his brow and around his mouth, at first sight gave him a repulsive and almost fierce expression.

I glanced at the book partially covered with his coat. I felt sure that it was a well-worn Bible. My doubts all vanished, and I took my seat beside him.

"You have a good companion there," I said, pointing to the Bible.

He did not reply immediately, but looked keenly at me, and drawing the book nearer to him, he answered, "Yes ; it comforts me."

"You are better off than I," I continued, shewing him a pocket edition of "God's Promises,"

which I held towards him. He looked closely at it, and glanced at its contents, turning over the leaves leisurely. After a moment's pause, he gave it me again, with a kindly smile that lighted up his face like sunshine upon a rugged mountain, as he said—

“Ah, but you have God's promises written in your heart : I know it.”

I wondered how he knew it. However, the words were re-assuring, and I enquired what he was reading when I interrupted him.

“I was comparing Acts i. 8; Acts ii. 33; John i. 2.”

And now his whole countenance kindled with delight, and he spoke with that sudden vivacity that wakes up the whole nature when unexpectedly one hails a friend in a land of strangers. And then he said slowly, as if weighing every word—

“Sanctification, the work of the Holy Spirit alone, enables man to walk in holiness of life.”

The words came to my ear with a strange power in them ; but my reply disclosed my ignorance. “But we have Christ's righteousness ;” my unenlightened mind supposing that he was undervaluing the Atonement, instead of setting forth the fruit of it.

“That is true,” replied my companion with

animation ; “but Believers are expected to be holy, for ‘without holiness no man shall see the Lord.’ ‘Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world, and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.’ *This* is the promise for those who accept the Redeemer’s righteousness ! Truly none other would desire it.”

I listened, not seeing this was the very truth I needed, and that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the temple of God was the only way by which fellowship with the Lord could be attained and retained ; that by His power alone could the new creature receive strength to subdue sin, and thus the gracious One could dwell with him, and manifest Himself to him as He had promised. (John xiv. 21.)

I felt that the Lord had led me there, and I rejoiced in His evident guidance in bringing me into communion with the wayfarer ; but it was not until long afterwards that I recognised in him a teacher “sent from God.”

I enquired how long he had known Jesus as his Saviour. He replied : “I was born of God-fearing parents, and I have good reason to believe that I have a father, mother, wife, and six children, waiting for me with Jesus. For twenty-eight years I have known Christ ; but I knew I was a sinner

before then. And now," he said triumphantly, as one that findeth great spoil, "I know why the Holy Spirit was given to us when Jesus returned to the Father : for our Sanctification, so that Christ may dwell with us."

Much more he said that I did not note ; but doubtless it had its influence. Oh, fool that I was ! and slow of heart to believe that the Tree that lay in the garden-grave blossomed and bore its precious fruit at Pentecost ! and that we were thus brought nigh to God, that He might dwell in us, and walk in us, and that there is nothing to hinder our fellowship with the Father and the Son but sin. It was for this I was saved.

The traveller went on to tell me that the preceding day he was discharged from a hospital as incurable. The doctor had recommended him change of air ; so he had risen at five o'clock that morning. Partly walking, and assisted by a seat in a waggon, he had travelled more than twenty miles to spend a day in the country, believing, as he said, that by God's blessing it would help him.

Years before, he had known this spot where we had met, and it was on his mind to rest here, and take his scanty meal. I drew from him reluctantly of what it consisted, and found that two stale rolls were his only provision.

He had formerly been a brush-maker, but paralysis had compelled him to relinquish his trade. He had been a patient in several hospitals without any relief, and long had been the trial of his faith; but he related all with thankfulness for what it had worked out for him.

The shadows had lengthened when I rose from my rest beneath the old limes. Before leaving I related to my companion the circumstances which had contributed to bring me there, and placed my carriage fare, which was all I had, in his hand. The tears, which had not fallen as he related his sorrows, flowed as he looked at the coin. He saw in it God's careful love over His children, and the guidance of that Spirit of Promise whose work and might he had so lately proclaimed.

God has His hidden Church who serve Him in His temple night and day; the manifestation of Jesus draws them forth by the power of the Holy Spirit to witness of Him, and spread the light and knowledge of the glory of God as seen in the face of Jesus Christ. (Luke ii. 25, 27, 37, 38.)

The wayfarer grasped my hand, and prayed for a blessing on me. I know not now, I shall know hereafter, how much I may have been indebted to the poor paralytic's prayer.

I went thankfully and thoughtfully on my way:

although indistinct, another line of light had fallen on my heavenward road. The Spirit alone could teach me to profit, and lead me in the way that I should go.

I felt that the spiritual understanding of my teacher was beyond mine in the reception of the deep truths he set forth; but the Lord by the same Spirit had manifested Himself to both. The Spirit of Promise was the Spirit of Sanctification, and the Spirit of Sanctification could alone bring forth Holiness.

How imperfectly I have apprehended Him, how faintly I have manifested Him, the Lord knows. How much land He has set before me on which I have not entered, and how many enemies He has delivered into my hands that I have not slain because of my unbelief!

To fellow-believers who cavil at the personal narrative of God's abounding grace to His most unworthy and unlovely recipient, I can only reply that I would not willingly offend any of my heavenly Father's family, but this I cast on Him who has called me to follow Him, and thus testify for Him. I therefore pray them to bear with me as one among the weak and foolish things which by His sovereign power it has pleased the Lord to bless, and thus magnify His grace to sinners.

I have not sought to give a consecutive development of spiritual life, which differs in all; but rather to set forth the position of fellowship with a Living God as the object of salvation, the place of the believer, his rest, his position.

I would herein reply (as my only medium) to many welcome letters that have reached me, witnessing to the blessing the Lord has granted to my simple testimony of His love. Those cheering and affectionate greetings have strengthened me to suffer and to serve, and strangers have been to my soul as messengers from the Lord of hosts! Strangers! Nay! Brethren beloved! True, their kindly hands I shall never clasp, nor behold them face to face, until the manifestation of the sons of God! Then shall we know as we are known, and communion of heart knit here in one Spirit, shall grow and strengthen through eternal ages. I bear them on my heart, with every cherished friend, the gifts of God. In being silent in regard to the Lord's individual faithfulness "we do not well! This day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us. Now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household." (2 Kings vii. 9.)

“The Lord said unto me, Behold I have begun to give Sihon and his land before thee ; begin to possess, that thou mayest inherit his land.” (Deut. ii. 31.)

THE EXCEEDING GOOD LAND.

My heart looked onward, pleading,
“Give me the land of promise !
And with Thy smile, my Father,
I shall not know a fear.
Oh, lead me to that good land,
The land of living waters !
For I know my heavenly Father
Will His child’s petition hear.”

I looked for Him to guide me
To Hermon’s dewy mountain ;
But I found me in a valley
I ne’er had seen before.
And, lost in wild amazement,
My troubled spirit questioned :
“Where shall I find that good land ?
I thought my search was o’er.”

Light broke above the mountain ;
I saw my faithful Shepherd :
He walked the path before me ;
My gloomy fears were fled.
His smile of sweet assurance
Left my heart again rejoicing ;
He drew me to His bosom,
And tenderly He said,

“Didst thou not ask the good land,
The land of brooks of water ?
The pleasant land of promise
Thy dull eyes cannot see.
Behold Me in this valley !
Here I have safely led thee :
Dwell in the land of promise
Thy Father gives to thee.”

Jesus ! Thou art my portion,
My Land of Living Waters,
My Fountain in the valley,
My Olive-tree and Vine ;
Thou art my Bread from Heaven ;
Thou art my Land of Promise.
I bless Thee for Thy fulness !
And all Thou art is mine.

Lead on ; for now I know Thee !
Speak Thou, my blessed Shepherd !
For in this vale of shadows
I lean upon Thy breast.
I asked Thee for the good land,
The land of brooks of water ;
I find it in Thy presence,
My Everlasting Rest.





CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST-RIPE GRAPES.

“Be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land. Now the time was the time of the *first-ripe* grapes.”—NUMBERS xiii. 20.

IT has been often questioned, “Were the two Anointings of our blessed Lord (Luke vii.; Matt. xxvi.) by the same person?” The act is similar, while the testimony implied is distinctly different.

In the first Anointing the woman stands behind the Saviour weeping; she kisses His feet, washes them with her tears, and anoints them with the ointment. This mute expression of her love, and her belief in the power of the Holy Stranger to forgive sins, draws forth from the beholders the objection which presents the Lord in the twofold office of Prophet and Priest.

Testimony to the Son of God is responded to in this case as it always will be. “Them that honour me I will honour.” Nor is the blessing ever

limited to the individual. In ways and by means we know not of, it is timed to manifest the grace and glory of God, which He hath afore ordained.

Simon *said within himself*, "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner." (Luke vii. 39.) The reproof of the Lord to the self-righteous Pharisee at once reveals that his unhonoured guest is indeed a prophet, for while He reads Simon's inmost thoughts, He proclaims also the fervent love in the heart of the weeping woman at His feet.

The Lord answers the murmurs of his ungracious host by a parable that leaves him self-convicted. "For Jesus knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for He knew what was in man." "He saith to the woman, Thy sins are forgiven. Then they that sat at meat with Him began to *say within themselves*, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" Not only had Jesus manifested Himself as Prophet, but now as Priest He bids the pardoned sinner "Go in peace."

In the second Anointing the woman is distinctly identified as Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha, and moreover as one who had a clearer apprehension of the work and purpose of Christ's sufferings than had been then attained by

those who surrounded Him. John the Baptist had already pointed to Him as "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world;" and Mary's act of faith testifies an apprehension of the near approach of the consummation of the wondrous Sacrifice.

"Understanding is a well-spring of life to him that hath it;" and to sit at Jesus' feet, and hear His word, leads to growth in grace and the knowledge of Him. The consciousness of our unworthiness lays us in the dust, the belief in Christ's sufficiency will raise us to His breast.

In the first Anointing the sinfulness of the witness arouses the indignation of the Pharisees; but in the second Anointing it is the graciousness of the act which causes their displeasure. The odour of the ointment fills the house, and excites the animadversions of the beholders, who deem it an offence, comprehending nothing of the faith, and love, and deeper homage of Mary's heart. The costly perfume lavished on the Lord of glory is counted "waste," even by the disciples, whose eyes are on the witness, and not on Him.

So even to-day, if we depend upon the sympathy of our fellow-Christians in some act of testimony which they do not understand, we shall assuredly meet with disappointment. The appro-

bation of men is not the standard of the child of faith. The Almighty God has said, "Walk before Me." The broken alabaster vase and its sweet odour have not been wasted! Into the courts of heaven ascended a cloud of fragrant incense, "pure and holy" (Ex. xxx. 35), before the throne of the Father, an acceptable offering to the Son of His love!

Jesus, as Prophet, Priest, and now as Christ the Anointed of God, accepts and defends the act from a woman's hand, and without a reproof to those who have not light and love to comprehend its reverent mystery, declares wherefore it has been performed: "In that she hath poured this ointment on my body she hath done it for my burial;" and with kingly grace and authority He pronounces that this testimony of her faith shall be told wherever the good news of salvation shall sound, and be held in everlasting memorial. "To you who believe He is precious." (1 Peter ii. 7.)

These two Anointings, at the commencement and the close of our Lord's three years' ministry, present to my mind the two distinct acts of faith from the Church itself. The first is the recognition of the Son of God as the Saviour of sinners; the second, the testimony of fellowship which flows

from communion with the Lord Christ. The eye of faith looks on from the things which are seen to the things which are not seen, and beholds in the suffering Saviour, the Living God, the King of Glory!

O ye who have learned of Jesus, be content to be misunderstood and maligned. The words you have heard sitting at His feet, and the act of faith and love which flows from the heart's devotion, will be displeasing to those who have no comprehension of His claims. "Hearken unto Me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law. Fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings." (Isa. li. 7.) If by His gifts and grace He has called you forth to communicate the truths He has Himself imparted to you, whether you are accepted for your ministry, or rejected and counted an offence by your brethren, be assured that your testimony will live before Him who is to-day, as He was when Mary anointed Him "six days before the passover," your Sun, your Shield, and your exceeding great reward.

Then bow thy head, and God shall give thee meekness

Bravely to do His will;

So shall arise His glory through thy weakness :

Be patient, soul,—be still.

Watch on the tower, and listen at the gateway,
Fear not to wait *alone* ;
Take thou thy spices, and some angel straightway
Shall roll away the stone.

Go to thy brethren ; say "The Lord is risen,"
And risen but to save ;
Tell of His might that breaks the captive's prison—
Of Life beyond the grave.

Behold the wheel that straightly moves and fleetly
Performs the sovereign word :
Thou know'st His suffering love; then, suffering meetly,
Follow thy loving Lord.

All those who have consciously entered into the good land, which the Lord our God hath given us, must be aware of the lack of individual testimony as to what He has wrought out for His people, beyond their deliverance from Egypt's bondage.

If, instead of controversy over some disputed point of doctrine among the deep things of God, for the solution of which we must wait, the Lord's people spoke more continually *to* Himself, as to One whose human heart sympathised with every want, and oftener of Him to one another, how much would the soul profit ! The light His Word would throw upon His dealings would reflect many an undiscovered truth that appears, at first sight, hard to be understood ; and doctrine,—which sometimes divides brethren, instead of drawing

them together,—would be made evident in its varied ramifications, in a way that can never be argumentatively reached. Many a weary, lonely soul would be comforted, who now droops for the need of knowing that he is called out of darkness into God's marvellous light, to shew forth the praise and glory of Him who saved him by no power of his own.

What is life but testimony? If the soul is brought into communion with God it *must* bear it, and there is no real testimony apart from the life. Yet to live in testimony is to become "a sign to be spoken against." But He has said, "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of the Father, with the holy angels." (Mark viii. 38.)

God made His covenant with Noah. "Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations; Noah walked with God:" and God made known to him His intended judgments on the earth, and instructed him in the way of salvation for the natural life of all things which He had created, and of which salvation he became partaker by his obedience. God communes with him, on His intended act of destruction. He commands him

to build the ark. Noah believes and obeys, "And according to all that God commanded him, so did he." (Gen. vi. 22.)

Where does this lead Noah? Into the place of testimony. So long as that strange and mysterious vessel was in building, a vessel such as never had been seen on the earth before, it was faith manifested in that which the world could not see nor believe. This man, whom many regarded as a "just man," had now to live before the people, despised in the service to which God had called him, to hear his obedience ridiculed as a delusion, and his warning of God's righteous judgments scorned as evidence of his folly and presumption.

There may be much outward service without communion; but there is no communion without testimony. For instance, we do not see Isaac brought into the same position of testimony as Noah before a mocking world; neither called to the soul-searching ordeal of secret sacrifice as was his father Abraham; but Isaac is not without testimony. The people of the strange land wherein he dwelt witnessed to it: "We saw certainly that the Lord was with thee," and they desired to be at peace with him. His prosperity alone would not have had this effect. To dig wells and to build

altars seems a very insignificant matter in comparison with building the ark and offering up a dearly beloved and only son; but the quiet uneventful life has its blessing,—and this is full of consolation and instruction.

All are not placed in the same position of service, but all are commanded to obey Him who has called them to walk in uprightness before Him. Occasions of peculiar trial draw forth special expressions of Divine sympathy. So we do not trace the same marvellous manifestation of God in the pastoral life of Isaac as of Abraham. But we see that he had power with God; that he followed His guidance; that he received a confirmation of the blessing for himself (Gen. xxv. 21; xxvi. 3, 4), and the outward mark of the promise of the old dispensation—prosperity. Nay, there was something more. The favour of God exhibited towards him is in harmony with His blessing on Abraham. Isaac's separation from the people of the land is followed by the personal manifestation of the Lord to him, and every act of obedience receives the confirmation of the promise given to "the friend of God" for his son. To dig a new well, or to unstop an old one, may appear to us an unimportant service; but it was the source of health and prosperity to a pastoral tribe, whose wealth consisted in cattle,

and to whom water was a matter of inestimable value.

So to-day, to uncover some well of water that superstition and hatred have striven to destroy, or to find in the valley a new spring from the fountain of life, may excite little observation ; but it is God's work, and God's work has always blessing.

Failure arises in the two Patriarchs from fear of man. Who has not had to learn it by his own experience? "The fear of God is to hate evil;" and the Lord will guide the timid soul who only desires to please Him. "The fear of man bringeth a snare." It springs from nature's root-sin—unbelief. He who knows how much sin is the result of that fear has repeatedly set forth His word of encouragement to meet it. "*Fear not*, Abraham: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward," is spoken to all the sons of faithful Abraham—children of faith blessed with him.

"God is not a man that He should lie;" and Jacob, who was promised the birthright and blessing, would have received it in due time without the duplicity to which he lent himself.

But God had not forgotten His promise to the seed of Abraham His friend, and this faithfulness does not cease because of their failure. All this

is written for our learning, that we may know that the Lord who has called us to follow Him is the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. If His promise to the seed of Abraham was established, not by their righteousness, but by His truth, how secure became our possession of it through the blessing of the new covenant, by the offering of His Son, and by the gift of the Holy Spirit! God

“Is faithful to His promises,
And faithful to His Son.”

Our first missionary was the woman of Sychar. The type of a true witness, she goes forth at once to her friends and neighbours and declares whom she has seen, and what He has said to her; and “many of the Samaritans believed on Him, *because* of the saying of the woman.” There was spontaneous testimony flowing from the consciousness of blessing. (John iv.)

The woman with the issue of blood had faith to touch the hem of the Saviour’s robe, but she lacked faith to bear testimony to the blessing she had received. But Jesus cannot be hid. The power of the Lord, that was present to heal, was present to increase her faith, and at His word “she fell down before Him, and declared unto Him before all the people for what cause she had touched

Him, and how she was healed immediately." (Luke viii. 47.)

The poor demoniac of the Gadarenes would have followed Jesus, with His disciples ; but this would have left an uncertain testimony amongst those who only knew him as one possessed of devils. Therefore "Jesus sent him away, saying, Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him. And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received Him ; for they were all waiting for Him." (Luke viii.) This was faith yielding fruit, and obedience bringing forth blessing to the glory of God.

It does not appear that this witness for Christ tarried pondering how his message would be received—that he, so lately known as a demoniac, should come forth and proclaim the work of the Lord ! But behold the incontrovertible facts ! He is clothed, and in his right mind, and sitting at the feet of Jesus.

And will ye be silent, O ye who have known the mercy of God ? What to thee is the judgment of those who despise His oracles and scorn His witnesses ? Will ye not tell forth His truth, and

proclaim the glory of Him whose ear is not heavy and whose arm is not shortened?

In regard to the reception of justification by faith, even the *Christian*, if he does not seek in the law of the Lord and rejoice in His love, exclaims, "Presumption." Nay. *It is written*, "He that believeth *is* justified;" therefore he makes God a liar. But in the case of a believer, justified by faith, *living* by faith, they say like Festus, "Thou art beside thyself." Yet God has declared, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

"What reason ye in your hearts? Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?" (Luke v. 22-23.) And they who beheld him walk and glorify God were amazed, and glorified God also.

When Jesus gave sight to the blind man, he *followed* Him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they *saw* it, gave *praise* unto God. Thus the witness to faith calls forth many witnesses to praise.

You find a man languishing under some painful and complicated malady, dragging on a miserable existence. But see the sudden interest evident in his face when you tell him of a Great Physician who has cured you of even a worse state of disease; and that now, by the aid of a powerful

remedy which He has prescribed, you are restored! The drooping head is raised to listen; a gleam of hope beams in the languid eye that marks your health and vigour; and he says—

“Can such things be for me?”

“Yes, for you. I can answer for my Good Physician, to all who will go to Him ‘without money and without price;’ He never sent one unhealed away! Oh, how your heart will rejoice in the fame of the Great Healer being extended; and the poor, sick, hopeless incurable says, ‘I will arise, and go.’”

I was not far advanced in spiritual knowledge when I was led to the outskirts of a town on the English coast, rising into repute from its genial climate. It had not long been frequented by invalids, and consequently the tradespeople were snared into making haste to be rich.

Unmitigated neuralgia left me powerless to visit or to receive visitors, with the exception of those who were drawn by my Lord’s loving providence to my dwelling for His own purpose.

Through a servant whom I had interested (I then hoped savingly) in the gospel, I was able to circulate books and tracts among those neighbours whom I could not otherwise have reached.

The handsome, busy, thoughtless wife of a

thriving tradesman particularly interested me from the beginning, knowing her to be the subject of continual prayer by an old disciple whom I loved. I had only seen her once. I was never able to have an interview with her, and she had great ingenuity in avoiding me when it seemed practicable. However, she received the books I sent her, and promised to read them when she had leisure. I often prayed for her in concert with the Lord's dear remembrancer, whose faith in His promise still witnesses to the blessing wrought out by simple trust. She is waiting at home with Jesus, and I reaped of her sowing.

The winter and spring passed. I left the place without any evidence that our prayers had been answered in this case. The faith and patience of my dear old friend failed not, but mine were at the ebb. I had to learn that the times and seasons of answered prayer work out God's special grace in a way our finite understanding cannot read.

"We must have patience for the answer," she would say to me; "by and by it will *surely* be seen," thus soothing my impatient desire to glean golden grain from fallow ground, unbroken for the seed.

Three years had gone by, and found my unwilling steps constrained in the direction of the same

town, now increased in size and importance. The dwelling appointed me was far removed from my former abode, and situated in the town itself.

One morning, before the close of my first week's sojourn, I was requested to visit an invalid, whose death was daily anticipated. Said the friend who made the request,

"I am not at all sure that she is safe, for she has no settled peace. Will you go and see her?"

I replied that it was impossible that day.

"To-morrow it may be too late," was the rejoinder, with something of reproach in the tone.

No anxious thought crossed my mind, and I could reply: "Not so. If it is *really* needful for me to see her, she will not die to-day."

Another and yet another day passed before I could leave the house, but my mind was kept in peace, knowing that she had one who truly loved Jesus to minister to her, and was not dependent on an instrument laid aside by the Lord.

The day came, and I was free to visit the invalid. I entered the large comfortable room, which was indeed a chamber of no ordinary suffering. In the pale, anxious, but still handsome features of the sick woman there was nothing to recall any face that I had seen before. She was very weak and depressed. She had no assured peace, but

desired it. She loved to hear the Word of God, but she lacked faith to lay hold of that inheritance which was already hers, and often thought that she had no part nor lot in the matter.

I have learnt how heartfelt sympathy can soothe bodily pain and calm the spirit; and we know how far by the grace of God it prepares the heart to receive the message of His unfailing love.

I did not *ask* her a question relative to her state. I listened to what she was disposed to tell me, which was very brief.

As I sat by her bedside, I simply related the grace and goodness of the Lord to myself; the assurance of salvation which He had given me in His Word, and which He had enabled me to lay hold of by faith; and the fellowship which had arisen out of this assurance.

I spoke of Jesus as I was then experiencing Him, a very present help. My heart was overflowing with joyful praise, in the remembrance of His love, exhibited in new mercies vouchsafed me. May-be He had delayed my visit until He had put a new song in my mouth.

She listened to me in profound silence, her wistful eyes and intelligent countenance expressed the interest with which she followed the recital.

I read from God's own Word the invitations and

promises that had been applied to my enfranchisement from legal bondage, though I was at times taken captive again; but "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life;" and "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." These words were staffs for my own drooping spirit, as I beheld the perfect reconciliation of the child of God with the Father, bringing the poor lost sinner into the place of fellowship and communion which Adam had lost; and then I left her.

A week passed by before I saw her again; she seemed peaceful, but was silent as to herself. In spite of the visible inroad of disease, and the expectation of every one, life was prolonged. She was evidently nearing home, but the body alone exhibited decay; her mind seemed to me to gather power, and her patient trustful spirit proclaimed the source of her peace and cheerfulness. Nor was this all. Some who had visited her when she was first laid low in her sickness held errors in doctrine, which she rejected as contrary to the simplicity of the gospel. She did not shrink from witnessing for the truth, even though she was aware that she should forfeit the favour they had shewn her; nor did she withhold her testimony to the light which had shone on her own heart.

The fogs and frost of departing winter kept me a close prisoner to my room, but they did not seem seriously to affect my poor neighbour. I had not been able to visit her for weeks. All I heard of her was very cheering, and she often let me know that I was not forgotten. Frequently she sent me flowers for my table, which she loved to arrange herself; and there was always a text enfolded in them, which she had sought for me out of the heavenly treasury, that came freshly and with power to my heart, proving WHO had guided her in the choice.

Three weeks had passed since I had seen her, and I heard less of her, owing to the absence of a friend who had been in the habit of visiting her. One night I dreamed that she had died at four o'clock that morning, desiring in vain to see me, to bid me farewell; and yet I set off to see her, and arrived too late—she was dead.

I awoke in great distress of mind and sent to enquire for her, and heard that there was no change in her symptoms.

I determined, if possible, to go to her that day. It was a dark, gloomy morning, with a chill, steady rain, that gave no hope of clearing away. I waited in vain for some cessation. Satan was busy in suggesting that another day would do as well,

when the weather would be better, and I less suffering, and that the dream was folly.

But I could not rest; my heart was with the sick one whom Jesus loved. Thinking that perhaps owing to the inclement weather she might be lonely, or needing something that I could procure for her, I sent for a carriage, and did not breathe in freedom until I found myself by the side of her bed, in the same place where I had first spoken to her of my precious Lord.

She had had no visitor, it is true; but she told me that she had needed none, and that she had experienced an intense longing the day before to see me again, feeling that her time was short.

My hour was come now to listen to her, which I did in silent wonder and praise. She recalled the days to which I had never myself alluded, when I sent her the tracts and books; for before the close of my first visit I had recognized her as the prosperous tradesman's wife.

She acknowledged the love of the Lord in laying His hand upon her just as the object of her life's labour was within her grasp, and for which she had nearly bartered her priceless treasure.

"One Sunday," she said, "I was pacing the garden path of the cottage where we lived away from the shop, and as I walked I thought to myself,

We have made more money this year than last, and next year we shall make more. Then we shall take a large house, and have a larger shop: that will bring us more money still. And then we shall be able to build a house for ourselves, and have a garden. 'And then'—said a voice—"you will die!" I was so startled that I trembled. It was the voice of the Spirit in my heart, but I did not know it. I had never heard nor felt anything like it before, but it was as clear as my thought, and so distinct that I turned quickly round, thinking that I must have spoken aloud, and a listener have overheard me; but I was alone. It was the hour of afternoon service; I listened, not a footstep could I hear. I said, 'This is all fancy! No, I shall *not* die! Why should I? I am strong and well, and then I have my children to look after.'

But from this time the first symptoms of this terrible malady began to appear, the messenger of mercy whom the Lord had sent to prepare the way before Him.

The development of her spiritual life was deeply absorbing to me. She spoke with a power such as I had never witnessed in her before. I could but marvel at the growth that the latter rain had produced. She had never given me such outspoken and entire confidence; now it was unrestrained and free.

“And how were you led to this rest in Jesus?” I said, longing to trace the course of God’s wondrous dealings with her.

She was silent for a minute, and then turned towards me, and looked fully in my face with intense earnestness. Her cheeks were flushed with the energy with which she had spoken, and her dark eyes glistened with tears. She raised her emaciated hand, and laid it tenderly on my shoulder, while she said in a tone of grateful affection I shall never forget—

“What! and do you really not know?”

“No, indeed,” I replied. “I thought it was”—

“*Yourself!*” she said, interrupting me. “I thought you knew it long ago, or I should have told you. The first day you came to me, if you remember, you related to me what the Lord had done for *you*, what He was to you. I saw that you believed Him, and were happy in His love. I was always doubting; and when you left me I was more downcast than ever. At last it came to my mind that all He was to you He was willing to be to me, and it soon became my daily prayer that He would give me all He had given you.”

For the first time I heard her pray, and the fulness and faith of that last petition seemed to bring eternal realities very near. She thanked the

Lord again and again for sending me, and said she was so longing to see me, and prayed for me in touching supplication. And then I rose to go. She embraced me, as for a long parting, and said,

“The only text I have for you is the one I get so often for you when I pray: ‘Through much tribulation you must enter into the kingdom of God.’ Yes,” she concluded slowly and sadly, “‘*Much tribulation!*’ and I believe you will have it.” But, after a pause, she added with a bright smile, “You will come in, bringing your sheaves with you. I shall be looking out for you *there!*” and she glanced upward; “Don’t forget me!”

And so we parted.

At four o’clock the following morning the Lord sent for her who had thus looked to Him for peace and rest; and now she waits with Him. .

All the circumstances that had affected her brief spiritual life unrolled before me with a distinctness that shewed forth the glory of God. I took the blessing in mercy given to faith well-nigh weary. My heart at this juncture was discouraged in service elsewhere, and I had been led by the Holy Spirit to receive the refreshment of knowing that my testimony, here at least, had not been in vain. Had I not been guided just how and when I was, I should have failed to receive this blessing,

granted by the Lord's favour from those dying lips, and missed a landmark in the life of faith.

Often has my heart been encouraged by the remembrance of His wondrous grace. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed." (Rom. x. 10, 11.)

Ever wondrous are His ways, and perfect; but it is only as they are discerned in His light that they shine forth in harmony and majesty.

At this season the special work of the Holy Spirit had not occupied me; I testified of Jesus, and God honoured the testimony. But as I look back upon my great loss through failure, and ignorance, and unbelief, I cast myself on His faithfulness who did not give me according to my deserving, nor according to my faith, which was little; but according to His love, which was great. But in this instance I record, the Lord ordained me to gather the Blessing, and it was *not lost*.



*THE "PLACE FOR GOLD WHERE THEY
FINE IT."*

JOB xxviii. 1.

LORD, I would be nigh Thee,
Looking in Thy face,
Listening for Thy whisper,
Feeling Thine embrace.
From all other refuge
To Thine arms I flee ;
Spirit, soul, and body,
Consecrate to Thee.

Lord, I would be like Thee,
I would walk in white,
Choose the thing Thou lovest,
Serving in Thy sight.
Blood is on the altar,
Incense mounts for me ;
Spirit, soul, and body,
Consecrate to Thee.

"Wouldst thou follow Me, child ?
Mark the way I came :
Thou must meet the mocking,
Wilt thou share the shame ?
Canst thou bear rejection,
When thou long'st to bless ;
For thy true affection
Only loved the less ?"

THE LOST BLESSING.

Lord, it little moves me
Where my steps must tread,
With the sweet assurance,
‘Christ this way hath led.’
If through tribulation
This alone can be,
Spirit, soul, and body,
Consecrate to Thee.

“Wouldst thou walk beside Me?
Thou My voice must learn;
Thou must trust My silence,
And My will discern;
Lose thy life in living,
Nor bewail it lost.
For thy soul’s desire
Dost thou count the cost?”

Jesus! Lord! Jehovah!
I would onward press;
Every woe will whisper
Of Thy faithfulness.
From each snare beguiling
Thou wilt set me free;
Spirit, soul, and body,
Consecrate to Thee.

“Take thy cross up daily,
Seek the path I trod,
Nearer than a brother
To the living God.
For a little season
Fierce thy foes may be,
Go in this thy power—
Fellowship with Me.”



CHAPTER III.

“JESUS ONLY.”

“The Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills.”—DEUT. viii. 7.

“Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth.”—ISAIAH lxv. 17.



ARTH in its fairest form must be burnt up, but that “exceeding good land” which the Lord our God doth give us is the inheritance of the saints. We behold it “very far extended ;” we learn the riches of our possession as we enter on it : our land of promise is in Jesus only ! Why linger on its borders in unbelief ? Why tarry at Kadesh-barnea ?

Never was the passing glory of earth brought more vividly before me than in contemplation of a scene of unrivalled beauty off the coast of Sicily. Mountains of varied forms and hues rose around from Monte Pellegrino to the distant snow of Etna, blending in purple under-tones, and veiled

in the soft atmosphere, seen only in these southern climes. Valleys richly wooded with oranges and lemons, gathering light on their dark green polished foliage, contrasted with olive groves, and rocks covered with the gigantic cactus (the prickly pear), refreshing the eye with the subdued verdure; while the sharp outline of the palm, aloe, and cyprus, were clearly defined against a cloudless sky of intense blue. The sea spread like living sapphire on the sandy beach, and broke in murmurs at my feet, without a trace of the storms that had so lately swept over its now calm bosom. The balmy air was laden with the perfume of aromatic plants and flowers. Groups of vessels and fishers' barks near the shore, and flocks of goats upon the rocks tended by children, gave life to the scene. Over the gulf in the far distance the golden islets, like floating sunbeams, were all that came between the eye and the horizon. The sunlight flashed on domes and towers and cupolas of the city of Palermo. The gorgeous glory of earth seemed gathered into one focus.

Amidst it all my heart had sunk in sadness, as if I must feel to the uttermost that "all these things shall be dissolved." And then I realized in the same power that day when "God shall wipe all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more

death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.” (Rev. xxi. 4.)

Here was an earthly Paradise! What was within? One huge leper. But even were it not the scene of sin and sorrow, what could all this marvellous beauty do, seeing that it must be “burnt up”? Can it dry the tears falling on the new-made grave? Can it banish the agony of pain from the sleepless pillow? Can it extract the thorn of remorse from the awakened conscience? Can it speak peace to a soul on the shore of eternity, overwhelmed with its burden of sin?

What can it do? Testify of the Creator’s hand, which hath made all things beautiful in their time; witness to the sin which hath transformed it to a temple for the worship of idols; and preach to the circumcised ear, “Behold, I make *all* things new.”

The heart is the seat of the affections. It was created for something more than a fleeting sentiment for beauty and goodness. One object will always reign there, acknowledged or unacknowledged. A loveless heart is a lifeless heart. If the object in the natural life be low and base, we trace its impress, and the poison leavens other minds and influences other souls. Though the object be refined and fair as this earth in its beauty, if it be not inborn of the new creation, it must be burnt

up. The wealthiest and wisest of kings pronounced it "all vanity." He looked upon all the works that his hand had wrought, and the labour that he had bestowed upon his possessions, and he found only "vexation of spirit." Yet who could lay claim to more of earth's wisdom and earthly possessions than Solomon?

"God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart; and his fame was in all nations round about. And he spake three thousand proverbs; and his songs were a thousand and five. He spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of all creeping things, and of fishes. And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom." (1 Kings iv.)

Man may admire noble deeds, and perform acts of heroism and beneficence, and be satisfied with himself and with the world's praise; but it must be all "burnt up." That which is born of the Spirit of God can alone endure for eternity.

If we dwell within the influence of one on whom our thoughts and affections are concentrated, we adopt something of his character, and

according to the depth of our affection will be the power of the bias; so that if the heart is filled with earth, it will increase in its earth-power, and content with Egypt's fruit, care nothing for that good land that lies beyond Jordan. (John iii. 31.)

But how potent and how fruitful will be the heart in which Jesus is enthroned. How certain the blessing that flows from him that believeth. (John vii. 38, 39.) Only believe! The blessing of the remnant of Jacob shall become your portion, and the blessed of the Lord shall be “in the midst of many people, as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.” (Micah v. 7.)

But who are the possessors of the temple God created for Himself? Idols from without are brought within, and idols never yet dethroned live there welcomed and worshipped as God.

The gift of mind received from the Creator is used in puny efforts to break down and trample on that which cannot be destroyed,—the work, the purpose of salvation, the divine attributes of the Lord Almighty; or with ceremonial rites of external religion a man flatters God with his tongue, while his life is given to the enemies of the Lord.

Health, and strength, and affluence, the ties of home and friendship, are accepted, but not the

Hand that bestows them ; they are received as natural causes ; held as a right, without thankfulness ; and if withdrawn, resented with the anger of a heathen, as the dealing of an unjust Deity.

“Vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass’s colt.” Self-love and pride are the heart’s tyrants—the one blind, and the other cruel. It is the prerogative of the usurper to bind his captive in chains of iron, and delude him into the idea that he is wiser than other men.

Give the Lord your heart, yield unto Him your will, and you are free of the greatest tyrant within the camp, for His service is “perfect freedom.”

The love of the natural heart is alloyed with pain, carefulness, and caprice ; but the one perfect Object and the only perfect love contain the purest sympathies and the tenderest emotions. It is not a love so far removed from our daily need as to be beyond us. The King of Glory is the Brother born for adversity ; the Son of God is the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief ; the crucified Saviour is the Friend of sinners.

It is Jesus, Son of God, Son of man, whom we need in life and power to meet the crying evils of our day, in order that His sufficiency for this world’s want and for eternity may be seen.

If Jesus only lived on the earth thirty-three years

for an example, how can He meet our need to-day? Where is the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother? If His aim was to set forth the perfection of humanity, where would be the utility to us unless we had the power to follow it?

It was that He came to reveal the new heavens and the new earth, to open the blind eyes of the sinner, and to bind up the broken heart of the contrite; and not as a teacher of science, to make known how the world was framed. If God the Saviour were only a divinely-sent man, specially gifted to propound a novel opinion of an unknown future, and die in defence of His doctrine, then would the name of *Jesus*, that Name which is above all other names, have passed away from earth, save as the subject of a wondrous story of a certain man who went about doing good, healing the sick, raising the dead, giving sight to the blind, causing the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak, healing those who were oppressed by the devil, feeding the hungry, reproving the hypocrite, blessing the little children.

A Man in whom His judges could find no fault. And when even His accusers could lay nothing to His charge, the people cried the more fiercely for His blood—“Crucify Him! crucify Him!”

And so He died the shameful, ignominious,

agonizing death of the cross, and with His last breath prayed for His murderers—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!"

O wondrous power of Divine love! For this purpose came He into the world, that the world through Him might be saved. "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. v. 7, 8.)

The natural heart is flattered by the favour of the noble and the illustrious, though to-morrow's sun may witness it withdrawn; and here is "the chief among ten thousand" and "altogether lovely," for whom the multitude, sharing His blessings, have no desire.

Who can compare with Him?—with His wisdom and counsel? He giveth liberally, and upbraideth not. One whose sympathy is ever flowing, whose tenderness is unwearying; One who can comprehend and unravel the heart's most secret mystery, and solace its most hidden grief.

Infidel notions, hidden under many disguises, are rampant. The rationalist offers arguments most irrational, while he presents a face of irony and scorn against the Giver of life and reason.

"God is not mocked." "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." The rationalist would be wise above what is written. Satan prompts him to believe that *he* at least gives the evidence of a superior mind, by rejecting everything that *he* cannot understand; yet could he understand it, it would be no deep matter. The axioms he propounds are derived from faith in another fellow-mortal's opinion, or from his own knowledge exhibited in arguments more ponderous than profound. The wisdom of the scorner is comprised in—"man is wiser than his Maker."

Yet "who hath put wisdom into the inward parts? or who hath given understanding to the heart?" (Job xxxviii. 36.) "*Canst thou by searching find out God?*"

Pride and self-will reign within that temple formed for other occupants, and the blind heart desires no knowledge of Him whose Way is perfect.

Oh for love and patience with such, remembering that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John iii. 16.)

There are more unbelievers than would be flattered at receiving the appellation. Is not all

unbelief infidelity—nature's spontaneous growth? Is not doubt of God's love and power, His faithfulness, and His goodness, infidelity? Is not the knowledge of His will and the rejection of it unbelief? But for God's exceeding mercy to us, we should now be trampling on the blood of the Covenant, scorning the Spirit of grace.

How shall we meet this gigantic Antichrist in others, and in our own hearts? Controversy will not do it. "Should a wise man utter vain knowledge? Should he reason with unprofitable talk; or with speeches wherewith he can do no good?" (Job xv. 2, 3.)

Nay, let us take the pebbles from the brook—faith, and hope, and prayer! Then, my brethren, "be strong; yea, be strong." For David smote in the strength of the living God, and David's God is our God. With the Lord as our Rock, our Fortress, our Deliverer, shall we call anything for Him impossible?

Men's foolish sarcasms and arguments against the sacred mystery, which man pretends to unravel, may have been permitted, that you may cast aside the armour of theological knowledge which encumbers you, and trust alone in the arm of the living God.

The Lord's gracious dispensation placed me in

one of the crowded hotels of the Continent, from the noise and distraction of which I daily meditated my escape. The way seemed to open for me to do so, by a dear friend offering to accompany me the following day in search of an apartment.

Taking *my* wishes and *this* circumstance for my guide, I rose that morning sanguine of finding before nightfall some quiet abode away from the din and turmoil of the hotel, forgetting how often my Lord has to say to me, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways.”

While I was praying for guidance to another place, it did not occur to me that I had not sought His will in quitting the one I now occupied.

It is often thus. If we miss light upon the first step, and take it in carelessness or self-will, we are more or less involved in uncertainty and darkness. The following text came to my mind with power, “He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.” This I interpreted as a promise for special guidance in a way that seemed “good” to myself.

My dear and patient friend accompanied me in an unsuccessful search for a resting-place ; my heart sinking lower and lower after each disappointment, and a cloud gradually disturbing the inward peace

I felt before. I returned to the hotel sad at heart, and took my place in the dining-room which I had rashly promised myself never again to enter.

Towards the close of the dinner, in reply to some irreverent observations from my opposite neighbour, I remarked on the evidence of the truth of Revelation. This was followed by a lady rising from her seat and taking a vacant chair by my side. After a conversation which lasted until the dining-room was otherwise empty, she rose, and requested the number of my room, to enable her to pay me a visit the next day. She was then proceeding to a reception at the Minister's. I gave her my card, and was in the act of following her to the door, when my shawl became entangled in the furniture near, and while seeking to free myself from the embarrassment, two gentlemen approached me, whom I had not before perceived in the long and dimly-lighted room. They had listened to part of our conversation. The elder stranger, pointing to his friend, said that he entertained doubts as to the truth of what was called Revelation, partly drawn from geological researches into the structure and formation of the earth, and that he himself was not satisfied. He requested me again to be seated and reply to a few questions which arose from the observations they had overheard.

My faithful God who had thus placed me in a position I could never have chosen, was there to sustain and meet my utmost need.

Jesus ! the Living Word, the revelation of the Creator, and the Father's love to lost, guilty man, seemed the only keys I needed to solve these questions. Calm and resting on His promise, that those who trust in Him "shall not be ashamed," I took my seat beside my interrogator, whose countenance betokened that it was no mere emanation of sentiment or visionary idea that would satisfy him. But there is a power promised by the Saviour when He left His Church in the wilderness, and this is not to be confined to the eloquent orator or the accomplished rhetorician ; it is for the least in His Father's house if they "only believe." (John xiv. 12.)

I could but repeat (perhaps yet more briefly and simply) what I had before affirmed, that the truth of the Word can be received only through the power of the Holy Spirit ; that the province of the Spirit is to give light and to convince of sin, and to reveal the value of the grace which had saved *me* with an everlasting salvation, and was now offered to them. This was the object of Revelation, and not to make clear to geologists the structure of the earth.

My listeners gave me an attentive and gracious hearing ; and when at length I rose to retire, they thanked me warmly with expressions of interest. And so I left them.

I entered my room, no longer sad at heart : light had shone on my way. God had blessed me in spite of myself. He had indeed given His angels charge over me to keep me in the way, and I was content to be kept. I felt the strength and power that Christ's realized presence gives. Another soul was precious in my sight, and oh, how precious to Him who had paid such a costly price for it !

I was too weary to leave the house the following day, but had it not been so, I had traced the hand of the Lord, and understood in part what I shall know hereafter. He did not leave me without encouragement, but it was not from without. I could only continue in prayer that the Holy Spirit might water the tiny seed with the dew of His blessing, and that the grace that had drawn me might become the portion of the stranger.

A friend deeply interested in my anxiety, devised many plans to discover if light had broken on the dark soul ; but, like all human plans made *without* the sanctuary, they proved abortive. Unexpectedly one day, in speaking in a crowded apartment, I found the stranger a listener ; this was

all. Late at night I heard that the family of which he formed part were leaving the hotel by the first train the following day. My last opportunity of speaking of my gracious Master passed.

I prayed that if anything remained for me to do, I might see it, and that He would give me light and strength to accomplish His will.

It came to my mind that I might enclose a book with a few lines, and that God might bless it.

Early in the morning I left my chamber with the view of delivering the packet myself; but it was a trial to seem to force the truth on one who had not evinced any desire after it. I waited in silent prayer in the corridors, not knowing whither to direct my steps. But the cry for help never ascended unto the ear of God in vain; and scarcely could I say I had prayed when behold the answer.

Many had passed and repassed me, and there was a moment's pause, while omnibuses and carriages rolled to and from the door. A slow step ascended the stair-case, and in another moment the stranger whom I sought stood before me. I spoke my last words of hope and warning to him, and placed my packet in his hand.

He listened silently until I paused, and then —. Above the rushing of passengers, the re-

moval of luggage, the shrill cries of the porters that accompany the departure of an early train, these words came low and distinct to my ear :

“I came to seek you to bid you farewell, and to tell you that the words you have spoken to me have attracted my heart to Jesus.”

* * * * *

“Who knoweth not in all these things that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?”

Far be it from me, by the narration of this blessing, to draw others into controversy with the sceptic, or to lead them to think that indiscriminate argument on the Word of God is *from* God. If the Lord gives the service He will not withhold strength and wisdom for it; but let us beware of going before Him.

The Israelites were to be separate from the nations through which they passed or among whom they sojourned, lest they should learn their ways. We should be careful even of enquiring after the false worship or the sceptical arguments with which the world abounds, for the purpose of refuting them. If the Lord hath need of us He hath promised a wisdom which all our adversaries can neither gainsay nor resist. “It shall be given you in that hour what ye shall say.” A self-chosen

ministry is without power, and brings neither fruit nor glory to our Lord.

Oh for the entire perfection of the new creation, that He may glory in all our ways and in all our works.

The lady to whom I before alluded visited me. She was a Christian, but had become miserably entangled in the snares of the world. She had rambled from one country to another, devoted to Art and enthralled by the beauty of nature, which she strove to justify as tastes given by God to be cultivated. Her days were passed in sight-seeing, in churches, galleries, studios, and antiquities ; her ear and mind were filled with masses and music ; until the natural vision of the natural mind came between the eye of faith and its heavenly vision, and destroyed the happy sense of adoption.

She sought in vain to deaden her sense of desertion and lost peace, by the passing interests of the hour. She mourned to look back ; she feared to look forward.

The cry of desolation that broke from that wandering heart, as she threw herself weeping into my arms, rings in my ear now. Oh that I could convey its echo to another on the same perilous track ! Like a poor bird under the deadly fascination of the snake, she seemed unable to flee from

the enchantment of sense that spread its web covertly around her.

Amidst bitter weeping she told me that the nearest and dearest of her own family now with Jesus were trophies of the grace of God given to her own faith and prayer. Yet those cold hands, that now clung convulsively around me, before another day had passed were busily engaged in preparing her fashionable apparel for the evening's festivities.

Day by day she made appointments with me which she failed to keep. Disappointed and dispirited, these waiting hours passed wearily away, and our few meetings were brief and at more distant periods.

Late one night, long after all hope of seeing her had failed, she came to bid me farewell; and this was our saddest meeting of all—it was our last.

“Pray for me,” she repeated, as she hung upon my neck. “Pray that anyhow I may be taken out of all this. Ask that I may be stopped, for I am going downwards, downwards! Will you ‘tell Jesus’ for me, and continue to pray for me.”

I answered, “I will pray, but I know not how the Lord will answer prayer.”

Nor have I known, nor shall I know till the

secrets of all hearts are open before the Judge of the whole earth. A shadow fell upon me in that solemn hour that made me shrink from what that prayer might bring.

I heard of her again ; she lay prostrate with the fever of the country. During her last illness she expressed a wish to see me. It was delayed from fear of agitating her. And so she died.

I never knew *how* she died. I still cling to the hope that in those weary hours of hopeless exhaustion (for she had no pain) she was enabled again to realize the sufficiency of that blood by which she had first approached the mercy-seat ; for it remained in all its power to draw again the wandering heart to Jesus only. Yes ! *restoring* grace is not less than *redeeming* grace. Bitterly mourning, as I know she did, her forfeited peace, her wasted time, her lost blessing, what availed her those purple mountains, and cloudless skies, and sunny shores, in which her natural taste delighted, and where she found a foreign grave ? What availed her Art's multiplied forms of beauty, or the sweet sounds in which she vainly strove to forget her loneliness ? Death, the grave, eternity, swallowed up the heart's false idols !

The child of faith needs to be assured of the will of the Lord before he goes forth on foreign

travel, aimless in all but the gratification of what is called "natural taste." The continual change of scene, the contact with what he would at first gladly avoid, will otherwise stumble or depress him. It may possibly end by his looking more leniently on what first filled him with dismay and sent him to his knees. The lovely scenes and the enervating climate may weaken the life of faith by giving a preponderance to that of sense. Thus his own fair inheritance, and the eternal glory, will wane paler and paler to the spiritual eye. Things that cease to be desired are no longer realized, and this world's idols take possession of the mind. With Christ as our companion, our Shepherd, and our light, we may sojourn safely in the stranger's land, as elsewhere. Without Him there is danger everywhere; perhaps in no position so insidiously as in foreign travel.

Interrupted communion, the neglected study of the Word, soon tell the lost Blessing. If we lightly esteem the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, we become careless and secure, and an easy prey to temptation; and if we disregard His gentle warning, or more direct chastening, He may possibly leave us for a time to that sore grief—a dead and prayerless heart. The heavenly citizen must only trade with heaven. The goodly land beyond the

Jordan is in “JESUS ONLY.” “The eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.” (Deut. xi. 12.)

GOD'S UNSPEAKABLE GIFT.

“The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.”

1 JOHN iv. 14.

I PRAISE Thee, O my Father,
 For all Thy grace to me,—
 Thy arm hath set my captive soul
 From sin's dominion free ;
 For trust to know Thy faithfulness
 Will keep me to the end :
 And, first and last, I thank Thee
 For Christ, the sinner's Friend !

I thank Thee for the Comforter,
 This wandering heart to teach ;
 For all the heights and depths, O God,
 No finite mind can reach ;
 For strength, so freely granted me,
 Through countless ages stored :
 And, first and last, I thank Thee
 Through Christ, my risen Lord !

I praise Thee for Thy boundless love,
 That gave Thy Son to die,
 To bring again Thy banished one
 From sin and misery ;

I thank Thee for the victory
O'er sin and Satan won :
And, first and last, I thank Thee
For the gift of Thy dear Son !

I praise Thee for the pathway rough—
So much I need Thy care ;
I thank Thee for the solace sweet
When only Thou art near !
“ Thus will I bless Thee while I live ; ”
And when my race is run,
I 'll praise Thee still, my Father,
For the gift of Thy dear Son !





CHAPTER IV.

IMPERFECT OBEDIENCE.

"I have performed the commandment of the Lord. . . . What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?"—1 SAMUEL XV. 13, 14.

IN a large monastery in Tuscany, now emptied of its former occupants, and falling into decay, there remains one solitary monk, the cicerone of the traveller who may be attracted to the spot by the loveliness of its site, or the magnificence of the ruined structure. He complained of the tyranny that had destroyed their ancient habitation and scattered the brotherhood, and ended in lamenting that so many holy men could now no longer serve God !

"Is there then no sphere of holiness but in a monastery?" enquired his visitor. "Are there no means by which God can be served out of it?"

The Carthusian looked confused, and after a moment's pause replied apologetically, "*Ah! sì. Ma i pui piacevole di servire Iddio, nel luogo e*

modo che meglio aggrédano." "It is pleasanter to serve God in the place and way one likes best."

Thus is it with all who speak their own thoughts and do their own wills, and who, finding a way easy to nature, escape the cross. The Lord in love destroys the work that seems so fair, and scatters the possession not laid up in heaven ; teaching us that we are pilgrims and strangers, and not citizens of this world.

There is a natural delight in the success of our own schemes, which is not delight in the Lord. The promise is in "*not* doing thine *own* ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: *then* shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord." (Isaiah lviii. 13, 14.) Let those say who have been cumbered with much serving, without seeking counsel and strength from Him who is Wisdom and Understanding,—have they not walked in their own light, and in the sparks that they have kindled lain down in sorrow?

Much service is carried on without regard to the *manner* of doing it: the act may benefit others, but we ourselves lose the blessing which springs from fellowship and communion with the Lord in the details. "To obey is better than sacrifice." The Lord would be acknowledged in "all" our ways.

When He commanded Moses to take the rod and speak unto the rock, Moses smote the rock, and spake roughly to the people, which the Lord had not commanded. For this thing he was not allowed to bring the congregation into the land of promise. It was not the Law which was ordained to bring the Father's children into the land of everlasting love! The wrath of Moses did not hinder the blessing God had designed for His thirsty people. They all drank, and the beasts also.

But Jehovah, while He marked with displeasure the breaking of His covenant, did not forget His tried and trusted servant. He showed Moses the land into which he could not bring the people. He allowed him to gaze upon the glory which should be in the fulness of time. And on the Mount of transfiguration he became a witness of the grace and glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. He had seen afar off that land of promise which "the Lord our God hath given us." Everywhere in the Word of God we see the eye of the Master on the instrument, that it shall neither be out of its position, nor unfitted for its service.

The anxious and often distressing complaints that are heard from Christians over what appears unsuccessful labour, would be lost in praise and

admiration if they kept their eye on the Living God. There is a spiritual sympathy with the Master in the Master's work that should be carefully maintained. For the desire which has failed, and the work which seems to our eyes to come to nought, are as needful to bring about God's purposes, as the successful realization of our fondest wishes. The tide may ebb, but it leaves some of the treasures of the deep upon the shore, perhaps to be found by another who shall enter into our labours.

Occasionally we read of work "unfinished" for lack of funds, and an earnest appeal for money. Is it not rather lack of *faith*? Possibly the money is withheld in order to lead us to enquire how far our labour has been accomplished according to the mind of the Lord, and what preparation is needed in the instrumental part of it to render it acceptable to Him, and effectual service. The work in the soul of the servant is as needful as the work itself, for the labour may be done, and yet the workman have to mourn the lost blessing.

We have watched and not prayed, or we have prayed and not watched, or we have worked and not waited. The mere narration of our need to the Lord, without any reference to receiving an indication of His will, or seeking communion in

regard to it, leaves the soul in a dry and thirsty land.

The broken ships of Jehoshaphat were of no account; his walk with God was. Who of us who have smarted under the chastening of the Lord in our Ezion-gabers, but in the end received much more than we lost, in a deeper knowledge of Himself? Then, like Mephibosheth, we could say of the spoiler, "Let him take all, forasmuch as my Lord the King is come again in peace unto His own house." (2 Sam. xix. 30.)

When Samson slew a thousand men with the jaw-bone of an ass, it was neither from the force of the weapon nor the skill of the man whom the Lord had appointed to slay the Philistines, but "the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him." (Judges xv. 16.)

It was not for his deed of valour that from the same jaw-bone there sprang a fountain to satisfy his thirst; it was his great need, his cry for help, that drew it forth. And it is our great need that calls forth fountains from hidden springs in the desert; but the source must be smitten ere they will flow. Each need is felt by Jesus. "Give me also springs of water," cried Achsah; "and her father gave her the upper springs and the nether springs." If Caleb did not hesitate to give so

liberally to his daughter, will Jesus, in whom are all our springs and rivers of water, be less generous to His thirsty ones? "Ye have not, because ye ask not." The Lord is not straitened in giving, but we in asking. The natural love of power, the idea that strength and knowledge must stand for something, is one of the banes of service.

Gideon, so weak and timid, could not boast of anything he had done, or anything he seemed fitted to do. Yet what a mighty warrior he appeared to the enemies of Israel, *because God was with him*. But left a moment to himself, the spoil that he had taken in the strength of the Lord became a snare to his soul.

To do the thing that the Lord would have us to do, and to do it in the *way* the Lord would have us do it, may involve much patient waiting and diligence; but the labourer will then see no defeat of his cherished hopes, for the desire of the heart will be to find in the Wonderful Counsellor the Prince of Peace, and he will assuredly find his rest.

In one of my country sojourns where the Lord had unmistakably led me, my lodgings overlooked the garden of a pretty ornamental cottage of a tradesman of the neighbouring town. I had often

watched with interest the young wife and children as I sat in the twilight. It took no lengthened observation to discover that Jesus had no place in the little household, and I prayed for them.

The time arrived for me to leave the place. The night previous to my departure, soon after I had retired to rest, I was awakened by severe suffering, followed by rapid exhaustion. I lay awake marvelling how and why I should have had this sudden return of an illness from which I appeared to have recovered. The night wore away before I began to cry to Him in whose hands are the issues of life and death, and to inquire if I might know why it was thus with me.

Was it to prevent my journey? No; I could not receive it as such. I had slowly and prayerfully sought His will before proceeding to make my arrangements to leave.

It was distinctly brought to my mind, that the family for whom I had prayed had never received any testimony from me that God cared for their souls.

I had been content to believe that He would in some way bless them through my prayer; but "faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." (James ii. 17.) There had been no confession with my lips in testimony of His love and of His

power to save. It was all true. I knew that I needed arousing to a sense of my negligence and carelessness in service.

I accepted the reproof, made confession of my slothfulness, and praised the tender love that would not let me leave my place without the blessing He had ordained for me. For "all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light; for whatsoever doth make manifest is light." (Eph. v. 13).

I rejoiced in it; and to fit me to do the will of the Lord, I prayed for a deep healing sleep. According to my prayer it was granted me. Can any one who loves the Lord believe that, after a few hours of profound slumber, I awoke refreshed and well, with no recollection of the prayer that had brought it, and the dealing of the Holy Spirit with my soul no more impressed on my conscience than a fleeting vision of the night? Delighted with being sufficiently recovered to undertake the journey, I decided to complete my arrangements for leaving in the afternoon. But God had not forgotten His faithless child. I lost all my energy; began to vacillate as to whether the journey should be undertaken at all; and became restless and distressed.

I sat listlessly at the drawing-room window.

The cottage met my sight, and that night-watch of mercy and forgiveness neglected rolled like a cloud over my desolate heart.

The upper casements of the cottage were closely curtained. I had casually heard that there was sickness in the house. The children were at a neighbour's. I missed them from their sunny garden. The mother I had seen pass to and fro. It was, then, the husband who was laid low.

I asked the Lord to let some one come to the door, as a sign that I should go over. The door remained closed; no one went in or out; all seemed still as death.

I opened my Bible: it was a dead letter to me. No line of promise, no word of encouragement, beamed on my trembling soul; the shadow waxed deeper and darker. Once more I sat before the Lord and reviewed the past in His light, and then there came the conviction that I had no right to ask for any sign in a path clearly pointed out to me: the promises were for the upright and pure in heart, and not for the fool who turns aside to his crooked ways.

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." It is not for us to say, "I felt," or "I thought," when God has said, "*This* is the way; walk ye in it." I threw on my shawl and walked

rapidly to the cottage, rather with a dread of something befalling me than with any other impulse.

All was quiet without and within : it would have been a relief if it had not been so. I knocked and knocked again, and was thankful for the long interval that elapsed before any one appeared. During that time the unnumbered mercies of my much-forgiving God flowed over my mind and melted my hard heart. I could realize His gracious care over His erring child. My courage until then had quite failed me.

At last the servant opened the door; and I, who had tarried on the threshold as a servant who unwillingly obeys a master's command, crossed with a light, joyous step, as the privileged child of the King of heaven, the bearer of His message of grace, the living witness of His love.

I enquired for the mistress; she came down stairs and spoke to me in the passage, evidently not expecting me to enter. She told me that her husband, who had been dangerously ill, was better. When she found that I did not leave she invited me into the parlour.

I looked around. Everything clearly indicated that its occupants had no knowledge of Him who was so gracious to me. I had no time to lose. I spoke to her at once of the love of God to *her*.

As I proceeded, a deeper and deeper interest was expressed in her countenance ; and the tears, that started at my declaration of His love to her, fell unheeded as she sat absorbed in the one great fact that came as a startling message to her ear, that the Lord waited to be gracious to *her* ! She was overwhelmed with awe and wonder that God could have put into the heart of a stranger first to pray for her and her children, and then to come into her house and tell her that He *loved* her.

The short but dangerous sickness of her husband had softened and subdued her spirit, and thus I believe opened the door of her heart for the King of glory to come in. She dried her eyes and looked in my face with a grateful smile, as she said slowly, like one awaking from a dream,

“It is as if an angel had come down from heaven to tell me all this and make me think of God.” And then I told her that a poor sinful creature like myself could tell more of the power of redeeming love than angels ; that the blood of Christ had been shed for the reconciliation of the *sinner* to God ; and that, as she confessed herself a sinner, it was for *her*.

The gospel was faithfully preached in the town, and she promised to attend where it was proclaimed. I prayed that she might never forget the hour when

her heart had for the first time acknowledged the grace of God ; and then with many a tender adieu we parted.

I walked down the garden path with a full heart ; the carriage was waiting in the road to convey me to the train. Leaning over the gate, watching me to the last, stood the young mother, with one child in her arms and the other clinging to her side. She was joined by an elderly woman, to whom she seemed to be relating our interview, if I might judge by her evident emotion ; and then the bend of the road hid them from my sight. I look to meet her in the land where sickness and tears have no place, and where the will of God is done perfectly.

We hear much of "silent testimony," but we must not shelter our supineness and cowardice under a false name. All testimony for God must come from the Holy Spirit, and we must offer our lips for speech or silence, as He may ordain. The heart will realize that the silence is offered as service at His command, as much as when it delightedly exclaims, "My tongue shall speak of Thy righteousness and of Thy praise all the day long." "That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all Thy wondrous works."

One day at the close of the summer I visited

a lady in whose spiritual state I was deeply interested. She had received the truth, and was longing after an experimental knowledge of communion, which can only be attained through the Spirit's indwelling power.

The evening closed in, chill and damp. Previous to my entering her open carriage, which was to convey me to my abode, she fetched from an inner room a warm and handsome cloak which, after tenderly wrapping me in it, she begged me to accept as her gift.

I accepted it reluctantly. I knew not why, for it was exactly what I needed, and its lightness made it the more welcome.

Soon after this I left the country without any prospect of returning. One cold day when the wind was very keen I remembered the cloak, and putting it on proceeded to another street at a little distance. I had not walked many steps when a sudden gust of wind raised clouds of dust, blinding me, and rendering it almost impossible to keep on my feet. I was covered from head to foot with white dust, and returned to my room with such a heavy sadness on my heart that I took off my cloak, and sat down assured that something was wrong.

I shook the dust from the mantle, which appeared to have entered every seam. Suddenly it

struck me, "Have I displeased the Lord in wearing this?" Not *willingly*; for it was neither costly nor unfitting as far as I could judge: but I prayed Him to make the matter plain to me.

It came clearly to my mind that I must never wear the cloak again. This was not at all difficult to me. But great was my trouble when He bade me return it to the kind donor. This was indeed a trial of faith; and the thought of paining one who had shown such thoughtful care for me filled me with distress.

But the Lord had spoken, and I felt that whatever it cost me it should be done. Accordingly I shook it carefully from the dust, and folded it in paper; but the Lord did not show me more *that* day, nor for many days.

Unlooked-for circumstances in a few weeks led me without any preparation to the very neighbourhood where I had first visited my friend. And now my faint heart sank within me, for I felt assured that in place of writing, which would have been comparatively easy, I should have to *take* it back myself.

The lady sent the carriage to fetch me to dine with her, *and I knew why*. I passed the hour previously in prayer, asking that in some way (I knew not how) this act, so apparently incompre-

hensible to her, and unkind in me, might be used for blessing, and that I might have light to do His will according to His counsel.

With a burden on my heart I went.

When we were alone, I lifted my heart for a blessing on what He had commanded me, and said to my friend timidly,

“I want to say something to you, which I fear will pain you.”

She answered me sweetly, “I do not think anything you would say would displease me.”

“You remember the cloak you kindly gave me when I was here last.”

The bright face changed colour, and she became confused.

“I am a poor, weak creature, but you know it is my desire to walk with the Lord. He will not let me keep it. I hope it will not pain you. I have brought it back.”

She burst into tears.

I grieved to have thus wounded this affectionate heart, but I dared not grieve my God, for His Spirit was on me.

Great was my amazement to hear her exclaim, “Oh, how wonderful this is! Now I know what it is to walk with God, and that He reads the heart.”

And then, between tears and loving expressions

of sorrow, she confessed that she had regretted having given me the cloak, as she had never been able to see one like it for herself, and thought it would have been more useful to her than to me.

I believe this was blessed to her, as nothing else had been, in regard to the position the believer is called to occupy as a child abiding in the Father's house. My heart was more than ever led out in tenderness toward her. Her simple, frank avowal, and her affectionate nature, made this trial easier—no less for her than for myself.

If we are to cast our burdens on the Lord, we must spread them before Him, that His light may shine upon our ways, and His peace, which is the heritage of those who trust in Him, reign in our hearts.

SENT OF GOD.

I TRAVELLED once a rocky road ;
A weary road it was to go ;
With burdens, too, a heavy load,
And where it led I did not know.

A weary road with rivers high ;
Wild beasts were standing on the rocks ;
And clouds came drifting through the sky,
Filled deep with fires and thunder-shocks.

But through the clouds, and through the flame,
And foaming floods, as on I went,
A voice of hope and cheering came,
“*Fear not to go where God hath sent.*”

That voice is ringing in mine ears :
Let mountains rise, let oceans flow ;
It matters not. Away with fears !
IF GOD DOTH SEND ME, LET ME GO.

UPHAM.





CHAPTER V.

HIDDEN RICHES OF SECRET PLACES.

“Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.”—JOSHUA i. 9.

“The way of the Lord is strength to the upright.”—PROV. x. 29.

IN what appears to our short-sighted vision a momentous affair we watch and pray that the will of the Lord may be done; yet in the smaller transactions of every-day life how much is undertaken without any reference as to what is the will of the Lord! One act is not more important than the other. The Lord Jesus, unto whom all power is given in heaven and on earth, has declared, “Without Me ye can do *nothing*.”

We hear lamentations from some who have enjoyed sensible communion with the Lord in a furnace heated seven times beyond its wont: “I walked through the fire and I was not burned, neither did the flames kindle upon me; for the

sweet presence of the Son of God kept me in peace. Why is it not with me as in days past?" And the reply has generally been found in this—that the heart has rested on its trial and deliverance more than on Jesus. Thus the Lord has been neglected in daily walking.

The believer who aims to walk uprightly before God has ever the desire of knowing His will and doing it; and yet how frequently his acts are followed by anxious thought and fear that, after all, he has been suffered to do his *own* will! Thus he distrusts God's love and faithfulness, and brings shadows on his soul.

My heart responds to any from whom this cry of distress has arisen, either from failure or uncertainty, because results are other than they anticipated. Another's experience is insufficient to meet a case which may appear similar; yet, for my own part, I have generally found that my lack of simplicity and uprightness has been the beam in the eye to cloud my vision, or that I have failed in the precepts of the Word of God on which the promises are entailed.

The revelation of God, in and through the Scriptures, is of no private interpretation; He has promised the Spirit of Truth to unfold it. (John xvi. 14.) But has He limited the operation of the

Spirit to the written Word? Nay, the abode of the Spirit is in the temple of God, the consecrated heart. (2 Cor. vi. 16.) And to the soul that has Jesus for its object of faith and love there are numberless communications to establish the promise, "I will guide thee with mine eye,"—if only the ear is listening, and we are obedient to His revealed will.

"Are you not liable to delusion?" is one of the questions I hear. "Are you not sometimes deceived, and led to believe that an impression or guidance is of God, when it is only the effect of your imagination?"

There are wicked spirits in heavenly places now, as when the Epistle to the Ephesians was written; and assuredly now as then, the carnal or careless mind might assert certain guidance to be of the Lord, when it has been solely the desire of the natural heart to work out its own will. Such are "prophets of the deceit of their own heart." In this, as in every other form of spiritual warfare, we need the whole armour of God. (Eph. vi. 11, 12.)

There is our besetting sin, unbelief—a giant in the battle-field; there is his offspring, fear—fear of results. There is our ever-watchful foe, with his devices to draw the foot aside from faithful

following. "Our persecutors are swifter than the eagles of the heaven ; they pursued us upon the mountains ; they laid wait for us in the wilderness." Nevertheless, we are not ignorant of Satan's devices. "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

If any influence bias the mind contrary to the revealed will of God, then it is not of the Holy Spirit. But there are multiplied instances every day in which the circumcised ear will be able to hear, and the eye fixed on Jesus to perceive, the providence that guides, or the still more delicate manifestation of the inner light.

The Word of God is eminently practical. "The entrance of thy Word giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple." The work of the Holy Spirit is practical—His teaching, leading, and action. "I have taught thee in the way of wisdom ; I have led thee in right paths." "When thou goest thy steps shall not be straitened, and when thou runnest thou shalt not stumble." If we foster the imaginations of the heart, in place of diligently searching the Scriptures with prayerful watchfulness, we shall give Satan an advantage over us. There is a feverish excitement, miscalled "joy in the Lord," which is but a flame of nature's kindling at the success of a natural desire.

One who is accustomed to try his way by the precepts of the Word, and to live in the realized sense of God's favour, will be conscious of any departure from His known will; unless, as is sometimes the case, the natural will has been tenaciously held, and the heedless steps tread a path that seems good to itself.

That more peculiar and powerful manifestations of the Spirit are given for our peculiar needs, there is no doubt; but it is when the heart's affections are fixed on Jesus, that in His light we see light, and communion over common things gives a warmth and gladness to every-day life.

We cannot abide in Christ unless the Holy Spirit is abiding in us. How otherwise are we to be "filled with the knowledge of *His will* in all wisdom and spiritual understanding"? "What man is he that feareth the Lord? him shall He teach in the way that He shall choose." *How* will He teach him? Certainly not by carnal means, but by the *Comforter*, who the Lord Jesus promised should lead His people into all truth.

The work and agency of the Holy Spirit seem to be the special truth against which the wiles of Antichrist are directed. Magnetism and biology prepared the way for the professed wonders of spiritualism, to which the natural mind eagerly

turns ; yet the greater marvels of redeeming grace, and the gift and power of the Holy Spirit, are rejected.

It is one of the saddest things in our day to see those who are professedly servants of the Lord not desiring to *know* the power of the Holy Spirit *experimentally* in themselves ; doubting it when it is unmistakably before them ; and lending all their influence to prevent others from seeking after the gift of God, by which alone they can glorify Him.

To suppose that the work of the Holy Ghost is confined to certain flashes of thought over the written Word would be to limit His action to an instrument. The conversion or turning round of a soul must be by His power ; the sustaining life must be imparted moment by moment from Him. And if we only admit His action in some remarkable providence, it is circumscribing Him to times, and places, and instruments.

All His ways are remarkable, if we see Jesus-Jehovah—the Lord Almighty—in them, and it is He who is manifested and glorified therein. It was the perverseness of Israel that kindled the anger of the Lord against them, when they said, “The Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord seeth not.” (Ezek. ix. 9.) And is it not an equal denial

of His power, His faithfulness, and His love, to walk without any intimation in life and conversation that we are servants of the living God?

The Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost that Jesus might be glorified. (John xvi. 14.) He is still on the earth; and if there is no strange god in us, He *will* glorify the Lord in our heart, as the Lord has promised; for only so can we fulfil the injunction to "walk worthy of God, who hath called us unto His kingdom and glory." (1 Thess. ii. 12.) Whence arises the desire of knowing the will of God? From whom the patience to suffer it? From whom the light to read therein the messages to the soul? From whom the precepts of the Word carried into action? From whom the impression on the mind, which, prayerfully and faithfully accepted, leads on to service and blessing?

How is the believer to grow in *grace* without the power of the Spirit? to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God"? (Col. i. 10.)

When my impatient spirit fretting against obstacles is subdued; when what was a disappointment becomes a joyful opportunity of glorifying God, though none but He may behold it,—I cannot

suppose that it is of myself, for "in me dwelleth no good thing;" it is my new spiritual nature influenced by Him who created it. Shall I not praise and glorify Him for every beam of light that unfolds His love and grace, and follow on to know Him more perfectly, and by His strength praise Him more and more?

One morning, when in the South of France, I had to undertake a journey on quite an unknown route. The landlord of the hotel, seeing my anxiety to ascertain the exact time of the departure of the next train, sent for the night porter who attended the station at every arrival; he corroborated the assertion that it left at 10.20.

It was a long drive to the terminus; and when the carriage which conveyed me there had departed, and my luggage was deposited in the hall, I hastened to take my ticket.

Great was my dismay to find that the train now leaving went in another direction, and the one by which I intended to travel had been withdrawn. I had two hours and fifty minutes to wait for another. I walked out to the colonnade of the great station. The distant city and the broad plain beyond lay in the blaze of sunshine. Not a cloud veiled the glare. The wind was blowing fiercely off the Alps. Dazzled and shivering I

retreated to the place where the tickets were obtained.

I had prayerfully and cautiously taken this step, and I felt bewildered as to what I could do. My first impatient thought was instantly to take a carriage, return to the city, and spend the intervening time with a friend who had arrived the previous night, and whom I had only seen in a hurried welcome and farewell. Carriages were now hurrying from the station. I could easily have taken one, and left my luggage for the later train; but the *idée* came, "Would the Lord have *permitted* me to come so far in an opposite direction, after I had prayerfully sought His guidance, if *this* were His will?" For I had desired to leave the hotel at the hour *He* indicated.

What should I do? Two hours and fifty minutes in the noise and bustle of a Continental station, and alone! Crowds coming and going; porters and passengers jostling each other; cries and disputes in all the tongues of Babel outside and in.

"Why has all this befallen me?" I enquired.

I felt, after a moment's reflection, that I must not leave the station. But in what part of it could I rest? I asked permission to enter the first-class waiting-room. This was refused me, but it was

afterwards conceded, on the condition that I would consent to be locked in until the next train left.

It became evident to me that it was not the purpose of the Lord to make me a prisoner because of my disappointment. So I declined the proposal, and sat down in the common hall.

After a quarter of an hour all was quieter ; the gates were locked ; the porters gone to their mid-day meal ; and in the silence and unlooked-for stillness I was able to cast all my care upon Him who careth for me, and to feel satisfaction that I had sought His pleasure in coming. It ended with my decision : "I will wait here. Blessed Lord, Thou hast waited long for me. Shall I not wait two hours and fifty minutes on Thee?"

My spirit, which had been anxious and ruffled, returned to rest and peace ; and there came distinctly to my heart the words, "What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter." I was *content* to leave all to God ; willing to *wait*, and know not why.

An hour and thirty minutes had flown. There is a time when even a railway-station has a still hour, and it had now arrived. Not a sound was heard. One of the officials entered with his arm in splints, suspended by straps from his shoulder. I was the only waiting passenger. He enquired of the

watchman wherefore the luggage on the table had not been despatched. I advanced towards him and answered the question myself, following it by an inquiry why his arm was in a sling.

He told me that two months previously he had met with an accident by which his arm was broken in two places. He was not in service now, being forbidden to exert himself; but he liked to come there occasionally among the people. He was of an energetic temperament, and seemed to feel acutely his weakness and loss of occupation. All this he told me with pleasant frankness, sensible of the interest I felt in him; for I entered into his troubles with an amount of sympathy only known to God.

At last I said very gently,

“Do you not think that the Lord wanted to speak to you, and was obliged to lay you aside for the purpose?”

The officer started, cast down his eyes, which till then had fixed their frank glance on my face, and cheek and brow flushed crimson.

The thought of God's minute care and great love to *me* came powerfully on my mind. Out of the abundance of grace shown to me, I set forth the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Frenchman did not move. He did not

interrupt me by sign or word. He listened with deepening sadness.

Then I said : "Do you know anything of this salvation—the reconciliation of the sinner to God the Father through His sinless Son Jesus?"

The head of my listener fell lower on his breast, and in stifled voice, which no one could have distinguished unless listening with earnest attention, he replied :

"Yes, I do know something of what you have been speaking."

"Ah, my friend," I replied, "it is not *head* knowledge that will meet your case just now, is it?"

His lip trembled, and he replied in the same subdued tone : "I do know a little, a *very* little, of it in my *heart* also."

"Ah then, you will ask what the Lord is saying to you in this affliction, and 'what thou knowest not now thou shalt know hereafter.'"

Tears filled his eyes. He turned his head aside; yet it was neither in shame nor pride that they had fallen. I know not if the angels in heaven rejoiced over those tears, but I know a weak and very faithless servant of the Lord of hosts thanked God for them, and took courage : "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be

repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death." (2 Cor. vii. 10.)

I looked through my tracts, and found the translation of Mr. and Mrs. Gosse's "Stray Sheep" and "This is what I Want." I cried for a blessing on the messengers of love, and gave them in His name who could alone cause them to bring forth fruit.

The Frenchman took them gratefully, and finding that I had a packet of French books and portions of Scripture with me, I asked him to accept them, for I was leaving for Italy. He told me how thankfully he should use them in the long weary hours of solitude. He opened one of the books, and read aloud one or two paragraphs, which seemed to strike him, repeating: "Eternity! This is beautiful!"

At this juncture the doctor entered and approached us. Seeing him place the books hurriedly in his breast awakened his suspicion as to the nature of our interview. Like many others, dreading the effects of eternal truths on his patient's pulse more than the pleasures of time and sense, he scolded my new friend loudly, and ordered him to return instantly to his lodgings.

With a droll expression of child-like submission he obeyed, gratefully and courteously bidding me

farewell. Later, when the train departed, I saw him reclining on the steps of the opposite building, in the shade, attentively reading. Nor did there appear cause for the doctor's very sudden solicitude for the safety of his patient.

Had I been locked in the waiting-room, or had I passed the waiting time with my friend, I should have missed the still hour of the station, and lost my blessing.

Travellers now began to arrive. I was able to speak to some, giving a book or tract as the way opened, which many gladly accepted to beguile the time.

A young German lady, waiting with her servant, could find no seat in the crowded *salle*. I made room for her by my side, and the Lord, never weary of blessing, gave me the privilege of speaking of the unsearchable riches of Christ. She confessed to me that rapid travelling and sight-seeing had unfitted her for either reading or meditation. I offered her a book, which she accepted, and she listened with seeming interest.

I met her afterwards in another town surrounded by her own people; she bent eagerly forward and saluted me, evidently not forgetting our conversation on that morning of trial and blessing.

Never had I more opportunity afforded me of

distributing the seed of life. He is faithful that promised. I had run, and was *not* weary; I *had* walked, and not fainted. (Isaiah xl. 31.)

CHRIST, the Fountain of my blessing,
Grants the Father's promise still;
Thus I learn my untold riches,
And obey His heavenly will.

Shall I slight the gift and Giver?
Shall I sin my light away?
Nay, come now, O Holy Spirit,
And *abide* with me to-day.

God of truth and God of promise,
Thou dost undertake to bless;
Dwell in me in full possession,
God of light and holiness.





CHAPTER VI.

THE NET AND THE SNARE.

“Hinder me not, seeing the Lord hath prospered my way ; send me away that I may go to my master.”—GEN. xxiv. 56.

“They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon.”—NEH. iv. 17.



PERFECT love brings forth faithful service. It is the only source of holiness and testimony. “Perfect love casteth out fear ; for fear hath torment.” But the fear of evil is godly fear ; and the timid heart that only dreads to offend a loving Father or mistake His will, is moved by quite another influence from that which affects the “fearful” who know their impending judgment. (Rev. xxi. 8.)

I have experienced so much blessing in believing in the minute care of God over His children according to His promise (Luke xii. 6, 7), that while I offer my failures as beacons for others to avoid,

I testify what grace has done for one so weak and worthless.

If we judge of God's favour by what we understand of success in the way of service, we shall assuredly stumble. We cannot discern Him thus. The real prosperity of His people in this dispensation is not displayed in riches and honours. "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." To those who desire to follow Him with an upright heart He speaketh otherwise than to those who stand afar off. Nor are we to suppose that we are out of the way when blessings of earth's fulness brighten our path.

"I doubted if it could be right, it was so pleasant," was the moan of an anxious heart, as if all the blessings of the earth were reserved for the enemies of God. If the flesh is being nourished by God's good gifts, and the life of faith growing faint,—if thirst for eternal things has failed, and the enjoyment of social fellowship is drawing us from watchful walking and the careful study of the word of God,—then be assured the good things are being abused; and if light has fallen on the snake on the sunny bank, and you still tarry, you may have to weep your folly, and mourn your lost blessing.

One morning in Florence several letters awaited

an answer by the next English mail. I arose very early for that purpose. Before I could sit down at my desk I was disturbed by the unexpected arrival of some workmen, which necessitated leaving my room for two or three hours. I was vexed and unquiet, as self-will always is when disappointed. A moment's reflection checked the rising irritation. I remembered how often blessing had fallen on my path from the destruction of all my plans and wishes; and the hope flashed through my mind that the Lord had need of me for something else.

This thought became stronger as I stood at the open window and looked down upon the quiet street, and putting on my hat, I leisurely walked on to the Cascino.

There were only a few gardeners to be seen at that early hour. I strolled along, enjoying the still balmy air and sunshine. I was bent on watching, and was content to wait or serve as the Lord saw best.

I felt no heart-upbraiding that I was in the green beauty of the Cascino, rather than in my little room looking out upon the hot street. I thanked God for it, and enjoyed that sweet May morning.

An hour had thus passed away, when a nurse with two little children approached the seat on which I rested. She was English, and her charge

also. I found her a timid, sad-hearted Christian, without the knowledge of the riches of grace laid up for her in Christ Jesus.

I spoke of the joy of having a Friend in a foreign land, who was always near, always loving, always faithful.

This was just what she wanted ; she was oppressed with loneliness and fear.

She opened her heart, and told me her desolation. She was far from her family and friends, and had no help in eternal things, the value of which she had learned before quitting her native land.

She had accepted the place of service she then occupied for five months, and had been detained three years. She was heart-sick and home-sick.

She did believe in Jesus as the only hope of a sinner's salvation ; and knowing herself a sinner, she claimed Him as her Saviour from eternal condemnation ; but she had no experimental knowledge of His sufficiency for this present life ; and of the Spirit's work of sanctification brought forth by that wondrous sacrifice, and wrought out in the heart by faith in the Son of God, she knew nothing.

I suggested the probability of the Lord having led her away from the props that she found in His people, to lean on Him only, and learn of Him ;

and that now the cisterns were dried up that she might rejoice in the Fountain of unfailing streams.

One remarked to me, "No new truth is palatable." But the new truths set before the English nurse that day were grasped like a cup of cold water by a thirsty traveller.

It was evident that the means of grace that she deplored had taken the place of grace itself. She was trusting in preaching, and meetings, and ordinances alone, for what is only received from simple faith in Jesus. Doubtless He had thus withheld them, and was leading her to walk by faith and not by sight. This foundation truth seemed a light on her darkness. Her gratitude was hearty, and her delight unfeigned.

The children gambolled on the grass-plot before us, and our interview was long and uninterrupted.

She accepted some copies of the *Revival* to read at her leisure. She told me that she always brought the children here for two hours in the early morning, and that she hoped she should see me again. I did not ask her where she resided, but I made an appointment to meet her the following day at the same hour, at the seat we now occupied.

Accordingly the next day I went to the Cascino. In vain I waited ; no one appeared. And the fol-

lowing day the same disappointment. The morning afterwards, as I took up a parcel of books I had prepared for her, numberless objections arose in my mind against encumbering myself with it any more. It was useless labour going. Provoked by what seemed to me lost time, I threw off my hat impatiently, and sat down at last to my English letters. But before I took my pen I paused. I remembered that I had prayed over these books, and that I had moreover believed that they were ordained for blessing to this soul, to whom my gracious Master had sent me. How could my prayer be answered? How could the soul receive the blessing if I withheld the means?

“When I said, My foot slippeth, Thy mercy, O Lord, held me up.” (Psa. xciv. 18.) I saw that this was flattering God with my lips; asking for manna, and not going forth to gather it. God is not mocked! I lifted up my heart in thankful joy for the power to tread upon the Serpent. “Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you.” (Luke x. 19.) The foot of the Man Christ Jesus was on the Serpent’s head. I said aloud in testimony before God, and before the Serpent He had given unto me to tread under foot, “I will take this parcel to

the seat every day until I meet the soul I seek;" and I arose and went forth. This was the third day that I had waited, and I sat there happier than the first morning I found my service. I knew that I was there this day in the strength of the Lord my God.

Twenty minutes had elapsed, when the merry chime of children's laughter sounded among the bushes behind me, and the dear English nurse made her way eagerly to my side.

Every day she had seen me pass, as she watched from the nursery window, and she told me her heart ached to think that I was on my way to the Cascino, and she could not meet me! Her disappointment was so great that I doubt not it was a needful trial of faith and patience to her. An alteration in the household had prevented her from keeping her appointment. These few days had wrought much for her by the grace of God.

She told me she was engaged to marry a Christian man, who had prayed much for her that she might be helped and comforted in this foreign land, and she now saw that I had been sent in answer to *his* prayer. Her voice trembled as she spoke of their union so long deferred. She gave me the outline of the saintly life of his sister, whose testimony had won *her* from the world to

desire the "like precious faith;" and this first awoke the affections of her betrothed, of whom she repeatedly told me she was unworthy.

The simple annals of my countrywoman were intensely interesting to me, and as we parted I placed the packet of books in her hand; and in her delighted surprise at the gift, still as she said "the fruit of prayer," I marked with unmingled joy that she traced the hand of my loving Lord, and gave glory to Him.

We intended to meet again, but the weather prevented me leaving the hotel until I quitted Florence. I saw her no more, nor even knew her name.

Supposing I had not gone that morning, but weary as I was with watching, and growing suspicious that my listener was not in earnest, I had cast my work aside. Had the Lord no willing servant in Florence to supply my lack of service?—no one that walked in uprightness before Him to do His will perfectly? Yea! many.

This was shown me when very little experienced in the walk of faith.

It occurred to my mind that I should give some light clothing to an invalid. I argued in my heart against it. First, that the articles appeared unsuitable to her; and then that I needed them for

myself. I determined not to give them, but did not feel quite happy in my decision.

Before the week had passed I received a letter from a Christian friend. She told me that it had been much laid on her heart to give this dear invalid some light clothing, and that she immediately sent it; and great was her delight to find that the invalid had asked the Lord at the beginning of the week to help her in this way.

Shame and confusion covered my face as I read this letter. I immediately wrote to the Lord's happy servant, and confessed my faithlessness, disobedience, and want of love. Thence I went to the dear invalid, and found her rejoicing in this first answer to prayer for temporal things. She displayed the gift as a testimony to the faithfulness of God, and I sympathized with her, though sorrowful regret filled my mind. "I have called, but they have not answered," seemed to apply to me; and I told the dear girl how I had withheld the gift that the Lord would have honoured me by her accepting.

Whatever our position, "the wisdom of God and the power of God" are ever near to succour and defend the timid but not rebellious servant.

I have often recognized the Holy Spirit's secret action on my mind, in discovering to me the need

of some of His people, never revealed to any human ear, and known only to Himself. I confess that I have often failed in courage to obey Him instantly, dreading to misunderstand the leading ; but in these cases the way has always been kept open for me, and some sign of encouragement has been granted to assure me that it was the thing that He had commanded.

Satan has always a snare for the unwary foot—is always watching to act upon the evil heart of unbelief ; and of the slightest obstacle he will raise a wall of difficulty,—unless by faith we place ourselves implicitly under the guidance of His Spirit. When I have shunned the cross I have had the inexpressible pain of seeing others used for the service which was first offered to me, and oftentimes without any consciousness on their part of the leading of the Spirit, or of delight in the privilege.

Scripture scarcely gives us a more decided contrast in service and testimony than that which is presented by the prophet Jonah, and Paul the apostle, a prisoner bound for the Hope of Israel.

The great wind that woke the mighty tempest, so that the ship was like to be broken, drew the sailors to the side of the prophet. He was disobedient to the voice of the Lord ; what strength or comfort could he afford them ? They hear only

the avowal of his disobedience, and the confession that he has fled from the presence of the Lord. "As a bird that wandereth from his nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place."

Paul, obedient to the Lord, was in the midst of a tempest as fierce, but he was in a position to admonish the mariners; although they believed in the experience and skill of the captain of the ship rather than in the things which were spoken by Paul.

With the fearlessness that springs from the certainty that the words he speaks are the words of truth, the apostle could exhort and rebuke his hearers; and with a wisdom that leaves even the master of the ship at fault, he points out the only way of safety, and promises them confidently the result—salvation for two hundred and seventy-six lives.

As the sailors test the promises given to them of Paul, and received from Him whom winds and waves obey, each trial testifies to the truth. They sounded and found it twenty fathoms, and when they had gone a little further they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms; and in the hour when the sinking hearts around him were again despairing, Paul is their stay, and makes it a special occasion of honouring the Lord, and of strengthen-

ing them in the hour of peril. (Acts xxvii. 35.) So much for faithful following.

True, the Angel of God had stood by him, and promised him the lives of all that sailed with him. Yea, and *Paul believed him*. So also may we gather great spoils from our tempests, if only we believe His word: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." The same holy boldness will spring from communion with the same Lord who then stood by Paul.

One case occurs to my memory—that of a sceptic, in whose state I was deeply interested. He called answers to prayers "coincidences," and He looked on religion as hypocrisy (and yet in his heart I believe he was longing to believe it true, so much sadness mingled with the bitterness of his controversies), the joy and happiness which filled my soul "imagination." Nay, he told me afterwards he looked on me as a "clever deceiver."

The Lord by His great grace never allowed my faith to falter in the belief that He had called him to rise up and follow Him.

One evening, it came into my mind that he was in need, and there seemed ringing in my ears, "Give him gold."

I retired to bed much perplexed, and fearing that I had mistaken the meaning, I did not pray

about it, but thought I should see it clearer in the morning, when I would specially seek the Lord in the matter. The gentleman was in a position far more outwardly prosperous than my own, and it seemed an unsuitable thing to offer him money. I was very sad at heart ; I would willingly have given all I had only to be sure it was the Lord required it.

I slept : I saw the sceptic on a comfortable couch, but it was black ; his face was pallid and full of care. A little ray of light fell from a small aperture, like a prison window, with bars and without glass. Two or three comfortable pillows supported his head. I felt constrained to pull one away, which brought his head lower, and the light fell on his face. I pulled a second, and the golden sunbeam spread over his breast. I tore away the third, and he fell to the stone floor flooded with sunshine.

I was no more sad. I put up the sum which came to my mind as I spread before the Lord the gold I had, and writing the text He gave me, of which I have no remembrance, I sought the sceptic. God was going to work through *me* ; and it mattered not, with this *assurance*, whether I was despised or ridiculed for the thing I was about to do. Enough for me that the peace of God reigned

in His temple ; and in the smile of His favour all frowns were as nothing.

As I could not find an opportunity of speaking to the earth-bound prisoner, I placed the note and parcel in his hand, and bade him read it when alone.

Never shall I forget our next meeting, when he told me frankly the position of need in which through sickness and disappointment he had been unexpectedly placed. The softened expression of his countenance was full of hope to my soul, and he confessed this recognition of his want, known only to God, was the first blow to unbelief. It was my inexpressible blessing to see him lay hold of the like precious hope, to lift him out of his despondency to rest on the faithfulness of a covenant God. He died. The text that had been used for his deliverance from the last bond of fear and distrust was the last upon his lips, coupled with my name. It was a blessed legacy.

His great intellectual attainments had been used against the power of simple truth. I remember the sort of shame with which he repeated a dream that he had at this season ;—he was in a deep pit, dark and frightful, and was being drawn up with cords under his arms to the sounds of most enchanting music. As he reached the mouth

of the pit and beheld the light and gladness of daylight, he awoke with strange peace in his heart.

This is not the only case. I was used to a very weak Christian in a similar way. I hesitated so long before I had courage to go forward, that the Lord would not allow His child to suffer for my delay. He used another of His children, who confided to me the secret which I had several days before received from the Lord. I was deeply grieved at my want of faith, and prayed the Lord to show me His will again and to test my faithfulness. A greater need occurred. It was to His faithless servant He revealed it; and this time I went forth in His strength, and had not to weep over my lost blessing.

Are we to seek *signs* in a path in which God has already commanded us to walk? No; for we may thus interpret as a sign that which is in reality a snare. Opportunities are open doors for serving Him when we are abiding in Him, but they become temptations to us to serve the flesh and the devil when we are out of the way. As when Jonah found the ship at the port ready to sail for Tarshish, in which he embarked on the path of disobedience. And as when Agabus prophesied of the bonds and imprisonment which awaited the apostle of the Gentiles, as the reason why he should not go up to Jerusalem.

Perhaps this latter example offers one of the most instructive lessons in following fully the counsel of God by the leading of the Holy Spirit. It did not move Paul from his walk of faith, already in some measure opened out to him. He goes "bound in the spirit" up to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that should befall him there. He had the additional trial of knowing "bonds" awaited him; but he knew whose he was, and whom he served, and the Lord had Himself revealed to him that he must not only believe on Him, but suffer great things for His Name's sake. His fellowship with Jesus was the secret of his constancy and his strength. "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the Grace of God. And now, *behold, I know* that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, *shall see my face no more.*" (Acts xx.)

Nor was this the utterance of a stoic, but the expression of a full heart's tenderness, wrung forth in that parting hour by the sorrowful entreaties of friends who best loved him, to spare himself. And those only who know how keen is the grief of those they love can understand the anguish press-

ing on the *man* when he cries, "What mean ye to weep and to break my heart?"

Nothing is actually said in his writings of the continual preparation of Paul for service and testimony; but there are sorrows and trials, never written and never revealed on earth, which are measured out to those who suffer with Christ. "Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me." It was not needful that we should know what it was, nor what "thorn in the flesh" was given to buffet him. Neither are we told by how many tender ties his heart was bound to those whom he had begotten in the gospel, and who were consequently inexpressibly dear to him, or to those with whom he had walked in faithful fellowship.

While setting forth the whole counsel of God, he never forgets some word of tender greeting to "Timothy, his dear son in the faith;" to the beloved brethren in the church at Philippi, his "joy and crown," his "dearly beloved." In his epistle to Philemon, that wisest and sweetest letter ever written in behalf of a repentant servant, we read the heart of the man who knew the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforted him in tribulation, before he himself was prepared to comfort those who were in any trou-

ble. (2 Cor. i.) Suffering brethren, let us take courage.

The faithful witness, walking towards the place where bonds and perhaps death await him, shrinks before the tears and loving entreaties of those who counted his life dear unto them. The Holy Spirit never yet made the heart less tender; and continually in the epistles of Paul, there beams the sympathy that shone through the life of the "Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief." Afflictions, bonds, thorns in the flesh, have a very different voice if they meet us out of the way. Yet all are ordained to bring the soul nearer to the Lord, that He may manifest Himself through them.

After I quitted England my eye-sight suddenly failed me, so that I could not read or write without intense pain, which compelled me to relinquish all employment. This continued without any amelioration. The long summer days had many weary hours. Every available outlet of service and testimony seemed closed for me, from the necessity of my solitary existence; though at times light fell with wonderful power upon the word of God that I had received, and yielded strength and profit on the way.

I asked the Lord if He would show me something that I could do for Him. Occasionally, in

the evening, I walked out to meet the peasants returning from their day's labour, and distributed tracts, or spoke a few words to them when they would listen. But the busy vintage was now at hand, and often, from the lateness of the season, their work was protracted until night. As it was necessary that I should return to my abode before the dew fell, I no longer met them. No opportunity presented itself of serving my beloved Master directly; but my petition lay before Him, and I quieted myself "as a weaned child."

One evening, in taking my stroll before sunset, on the table land above the valley (to which narrow bounds my walk was often limited) I saw a man or woman, I could not distinguish which, driving a flock of goats or sheep, which seemed to be now wildly rambling over the adjacent fields.

I was on the point of returning to the chateau, but paused and went slowly down the valley towards them. The driver proved to be a woman, in a large and peculiar peasant's hat, such as I had never seen before; and her dress and whole appearance presented a singular but not uninteresting spectacle. Her weather-beaten face had neither softness nor intelligence to recommend it, but her voice sounded full of kindness to a poor half-

starved heifer that feebly followed her ; its bones nearly protruded from its rough hide, and the miserable appearance of their new companion seemed to have scattered the flock in terror.

She told me, in answer to my question, that the poor heifer was perishing on the mountains from the long drought, which had left the streams dry and had withered the herbage, and that she had been sent by her master from the neighbouring village to seek for it, and bring it home to the pasture and water in the valley. Her compassion to the poor animal, and the patience and kindness with which she coaxed it along, interested me.

I spoke to her of the goodness of God to every living thing ; of His sending "the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills," giving drink to every beast of the field, causing "the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man." I asked her if she knew that it was God in His kindness who had sent her to fetch the starving beast to the brooks that in the green valley were still flowing, though not so full as heretofore. She listened, it is true ; at least she did not interrupt me ; but when I spoke of the love that smote the Rock, that the water of life might flow for us, she neither assented nor denied. She appeared simply more indifferent than when I had dwelt on

the goodness of God in caring for the cattle on the hills.

Two or three days went by. I walked the same road, but without any expectation of meeting the herd-woman. However, there she was ; the poor heifer, in a less deplorable condition, grazing now with the flock, and the merry kids, no longer distrustful of their new companion, gambolling on the grassy knolls hard by.

A gleam of acknowledgment crossed the face of the Savoyard as she recognised me. This was all, until I made some observation on the herd, which drew forth a smile ; and by degrees she lost the distrust with which she at first appeared to regard me.

I discovered that she was nearly blind. This awoke a sympathetic chord in my heart, as I had passed through many weeks of apprehension of the same calamity, which was now graciously averted.

I sat upon the old trunk of a fallen beech by her side, and repeated to her the portions of Scripture which told of the blind restored to sight by the Saviour. Her busy fingers paused often in their knitting, and an expression of interest kindled in her countenance.

The sun was setting, and I turned my steps to the hill side ; but before the herd-woman gathered

her flock together, she enquired if I often walked in that direction, and where I lived ; for she was now always in the evening on this road to the village. I told her that I seldom walked elsewhere, as that road was even and dry.

One day as we talked together a deeper feeling manifested itself in my companion. She told me that though she was now a herd-woman, she had once had a cottage and garden of her own in the plains of Savoy. Her home, with all that she possessed, was burnt to the ground, her life only saved. Her husband, after cruelly ill-treating her, deserted her, and was now dead (this she did not tell me, I learnt it from others), and her children in service, and from these she could not expect any help. Her hopelessness, friendlessness, and suffering, weighed heavily on my heart. She had not long left the Ophthalmic Hospital, where she had been in the vain hope of saving the sight of the other eye, which was pronounced incurable, and the terror of the coming darkness and desolation seemed allayed as she listened to the "old, old story."

At the same hour many fine evenings I trod the green lane that led to the foot of the mountain, in praise and thankfulness to my prayer-hearing God for the service I felt assured He had granted me.

And now the dear Savoyard's face lightened up at the first glimpse of me, and gathering her flock around her she would stand generally before me, her fingers occupied in knitting and her thoughts engaged on the wondrous subject of the love of God, a new song to her heart. Yet she never missed her vocation. She had a keen sense of any wandering goat; and if the pranks of the little white kids carried them too far from the bounds, a shrill cry would bring them all to her feet, and she contentedly resumed her attitude of attention.

One day I had prepared some needful gifts for Marie, and intended carrying them to her in the evening. But a snare lay in my path in the form of a tempting proposal for a drive. I looked at the temptation as an open door to please myself, and went.

Never, I think, shall I forget that drive! Like the bird that has forsaken his nest, so had I wandered from my place. The pleasant mountain air, which on other evenings had refreshed me after the days of excessive heat, seemed only to irritate me. When we had proceeded about three miles, the horse, a fine and hitherto tractable animal, became restive; the coachman, generally good-tempered, was furious; and the horse, quite unaccus-

tomed to the whip, rushed violently up a steep bank, whence, trembling and panting, he was with difficulty brought back. I never felt more distinctly the power of the question, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" I hesitated as to again entering the carriage, from which I had with so much difficulty escaped at peril of life and limb; but no house was near, no means of conveyance at hand, and to walk was for me impracticable. I took my seat with the consciousness that my heavenly Master had thus spoken to me, and that it would have pleased Him better if at that hour I had been in the valley field, according to my first intention. "Therefore they shall know in that day that I am He that doth speak: behold, it is I." (Isa. lii. 6.)

The horse became more tractable, but the swollen veins and inflated nostrils made me anticipate another outbreak. I confessed my sin, and cast myself anew on the loving-kindness of my long-suffering Lord; then I was at peace, and was able to pray for the precious soul whom I had neglected for my own selfishness.

In the morning the suffering in my eyes had returned with increased severity, and my poor Savoyard pressed heavily on my heart. Gladly would I have sought her, but I was now too ill;

and then the rain fell heavily for many days, and the cold winds kept me entirely to my room.

More than a fortnight went by; at last, one evening, I took the parcel to the field, and returned with it. The herd-woman was not there. I enquired for her of some peasants, but though from my description they seemed to recognize her, and said that they had seen her occasionally on their way, they knew no more of her,—or if they did, they did not tell me.

Then Satan suggested I had better give it up; that she was so dull and indifferent that she did not care to hear about Jesus, and only liked my companionship in her solitude. This was the sharpest thrust to endure—these eighteen days that I had not seen her, through my foolishness; this service which I had asked for, and received from my beloved Master. And now, what had I to contemplate? Service neglected, and lost blessing!

The service was not more precious than the servant. “Thou art my servant *in whom* I will be glorified.”

My thoughts returned to Florence, where patient continuing had been blessed. So every evening when it was fair I walked the same road with the

parcel. In truth it was a lovely scene. The mountains covered with the chesnut, with their crimson foliage ; the snowy Alps in their tints of rose and violet ; the vineyards in the valley and on the hill-side, with their amber and purple clusters ; the white sheltered châlets gleaming through the wood, and fruitful orchards, bright in the rays of the setting sun : all telling of the goodness of Him who openeth His hand and satisfieth every living thing—the God of goodness.

It was the God of grace I waited for. My poor Savoyard's careworn, weather-beaten face would have been fairer to me than "the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them."

At last I found her, and read the glad welcome in her face, which put to flight every taunt of the adversary. At the first glimpse of me she hastened to meet me, her unusually rapid movements startling the miscellaneous flock over which she ruled, so that goats, and kids, and heifer, and a solitary sheep, followed after her.

The tender greeting, the eager questions, quickly and anxiously repeated, bore no resemblance to anything I had witnessed in her before.

"Ah ! my dear lady, where have you been ?" she enquired when I was again seated on the old beech trunk. "How I have watched for you.

Some days I went late, and some days I went early, but my dear lady seemed for ever gone. The words you have spoken to poor Marie have lifted her crushed heart to heaven! As I lay sadly on my bed, and thought I should never hear your voice again, I said to myself, 'Poor Marie must remember the words her dear lady said, if she should see her no more. "Tell Jesus," "Confide in Jesus," "Go to Jesus with all your sorrow."' So I did tell Him all, and I do ask Him to help me; and He does help me, and I am consoled, and I never feel as I did before.

"I was there—*there*," she said with emotion, as she emphatically pointed to a ditch of black mud, "and she came—my dear lady—and lifted me up to heaven;" and the homely face was lighted up with rapture that gave it a divine expression. "Oh, madam! I am so happy!" Words never to be forgotten! They chime heaven's melody even now in my heart.

My sin had been put away. It was meet that we should make merry and be glad. The soul rejoicing in new-born life, and the wandering servant brought back to the sweet restraint of the Beloved, were alike partakers of the blessing of the new covenant (Heb. x. 20) in Christ Jesus. "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of

praise continually ; that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." (Heb. xiii. 15.)

How and why I had not seen her these many days seemed a mystery ; but I found that she kept the flock by the vineyard, where she now worked. She had gone forth to meet me with such unusual rapidity that I asked how she could run so swiftly. She smiled and pointed to her wooden clogs, which formerly had been the worse for wear, but had been lately mended, and enabled her to "fly" over the rough ground, she said. Dear Marie ! feet shod with the preparation of peace have shoes that never wear out, and often reveal the secret of easy walking. A little later I told her of the Lord's dealing with me, and my thankfulness for His tender chiding, proving also how dear she was to Him. She listened in grief and astonishment that I should have suffered on her account, but it was useful to her as well as to myself.

It was a great trial to her when she heard that I must quit the place. I thought to spare her the pain of parting. But later in the day it was pressed on me that I should see her and bid her farewell.

I went to the village, and found the cottage where she was servant and herd-woman. I had taken her some needful comforts for the coming winter. She put all aside without a glance. She

was absorbed in silent grief, that had neither tears nor words. All was comprised in the thought that we should meet no more. At last she broke forth :

“Ah ! chère dame. I saw you last night in my loft, clothed in white, with a brilliant crown, beautiful to look upon ! You stepped out of the blue heaven overhead, and came to my side and said : ‘Dear Marie ! The Lord sent you your blindness, and the Lord sent you me. Fear not ! Soon you will behold Jesus, and see me again.’ I said, ‘Oh, but I am going *quite* blind !’ And my lady replied, ‘It is the Lord who sends it. Soon He will take us together to dwell with Him.’ Then I awoke (and bursting into tears), my heart was overflowing with grief, for my dear lady was no longer there. All was dark night. But I seem to see her beautiful crown now !”

And so with many prolonged “adieux” we parted ; and as I again travelled on to a strange place among strangers, I praised the Lord anew for His loving-kindness and His tender mercy that had called and chosen His unworthy servant to seek the lost upon the mountain in the day of drought, and to guide one He loved to the green pastures of the promised land ; to lead the weary, thirsty wanderer, to quench her thirst at the river whose streams make glad the city of our God.

That He had given me the blessing was according to His faithfulness, not mine. Nor was it to be turned into licentiousness by making me careless and secure, so that when I was again tempted I should say, "It is the will of God, and all will be well in the end." It is *not* the will of God that we should serve as seems good to ourselves, and choose our own gratification, instead of following Him fully. "He will speak peace unto His people and to His saints ; but let them not turn again to folly." (Ps. lxxxv. 8.)

Nearer, Lord, to Thee I press,
Let me there in faith abide ;
I shall learn Thy happiness,
I shall praise for all beside.
Tenderly thou lookest down
On our warfare ; Thou canst see
That, by foes encompassed round,
We have here no stay but Thee.

Lord, with Thee alone is rest !
Wilt Thou in Thy temple dwell,
Not as some sweet passing guest,
But as one beloved well !
Bring thy heaven to my heart,
And its silent chambers fill ;
Let all other joys depart,
Only be Thou with me still.



CHAPTER VII.

LIMITING THE LORD.

“Seek the Lord and His strength, seek His face continually. Remember His marvellous works that He hath done, His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth.”—I CHRON. xvi. 11, 12.

ISRAEL'S rebellion arose from limiting the God of their mercies, and forgetting the works and the wonders that He had showed them. (Psalm lxxviii. 11.) Had they called them to remembrance, and spoken “one to another” of their marvellous deliverances in Egypt and the field of Zoan, they might have realized that the same power that clave the rock, and caused the water to run down like rivers, could as easily have furnished a table in the wilderness.

This is the sin of Israel to-day,—they limit the living God! And why do they limit Him? “*Because of their unbelief.*” Some do not expect the wonders of grace which the Lord would work,

and others do not desire them. They can speak eloquently of systems and of man's schemes; but the teaching, the leading, and the wondrous works of the God of their mercies, they have never observed; or, if they have, they do not remember them.

There is much of the Lord's dealings that we do not share with our dearest earthly friend, but which we call to mind and of which we make a song in the night to His attentive ear. And this is one of the preparations for service,—known to Him alone; made manifest to others only in its results.

By calling His loving-kindness thus to remembrance we lay hold again of His strength, and by witnessing to the tangible evidences of His love and faithfulness we may fulfil a ministry, the fruits of which we may behold only in "the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." (Rom. ii. 16.) Then you may see that through your testimony some tempted one turned from the broken reeds on which he was leaning, and with renewed confidence looked again to the living God. The same service and the same providences are not common to all; but we are all alike called to follow Jesus, to learn of Him, and to show forth His praise. But as every position and circumstance will differ even for each

individual, the heart must not be engrossed with former circumstances, but fixed on Him who rules them. It is through our forgetfulness of His power and wisdom exhibited in our behalf, that faltering faith brings forth distrust, darkness, and dismay.

Limit not the Lord in the treasures of grace He is ready to impart; limit Him not in the time of danger and perplexity. Nay, not even when your own folly has brought you into the straits whence *you* see no deliverance. The Lord is "mighty to save!" Were it not so, you would not at this moment be a suppliant at the throne whereon the "Man Christ Jesus" pleads.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John i. 9.) This very perplexity may be to bring some false step to remembrance, or to draw you nearer to Him for fuller revelation of Himself.

When Jesus entered the ship with His disciples He was proving the faith of His disciples, not only for themselves, but also for those who should hereafter believe on Him through their word.

He had in measure prepared them for this. "Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick? For there is nothing hid which shall not be mani-

fested." (Mark iv. 21, 22). And in verse 35 we read, "And the same day, when the even was come, He saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side."

There were other ships with them, but this one in which the disciples embarked bore Jesus Himself, whose care they daily experienced, and whose divine power had been so recently displayed. And now comes the trial of faith. "There arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship." Jesus slept!

Although Jesus was not exercising His authority over the tempest, yet the timid followers had His presence. He was near them. They do not seem to have doubted His power, but to have suspected His lack of love. "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" And He arose and rebuked (not Thy disciples, O gracious Master, but) the wind and the waves which caused their fear.

His gentle chiding of His disciples is that of a loving Father, who clasps His child in His protecting arms. "Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?" They had *forgotten* the miracle of the loaves, by which life had been sustained, and therefore doubted if the same power could preserve them now as they were being tossed about in the ship together with the Lord of life.

On another occasion the Lord constrained His disciples to go in the vessel *before* Him unto Bethsaida. They could not see Him now, but He could see them "toiling in rowing, for the wind was contrary." And when the Lord drew nigh to deliver them, "*they knew not that it was Jesus.*"

He was not seen *in* the boat, and though He appeared for their strength and comfort, it was not in the form in which they had expected Him, or as they had at other times beheld Him.

Nevertheless, He had so lately prepared their minds by a great miracle, that they might have looked forward to behold wonders wrought by Him. Now when they see Him they know Him not! Ah! they were not looking for Him! They thought it was a spirit. What confidence could spring from the belief that a spirit was near their storm-tossed bark? It is Jesus, Jesus only, that can save! His own familiar voice, that stills the sea's wild tempest, calms their fears. "It is I; be not afraid!"

The disciples had lost the assurance that Jesus loved them, and watched over them, whether seen or unseen; so that they were "amazed and affrighted." Why has all this befallen them? "*Because they considered not the miracle of the loaves, for their hearts were hardened.*"

If you have entered on a path, conscious that you have been called to it by the Lord whom you desire to serve, you may confidently reckon that He who has given you the commission will carry you through, for the Author is the Finisher.

The ear must have been listening before it hears the Master ask for a messenger, and the heart must have been willing ere it can reply, "Here am I ; send me."

When we find ourselves in a way we have not passed heretofore, we are often so absorbed with the difficulties and the dangers that may be met with, that we forget that the everlasting arms which sustained us in former trials, once as strange to us as this, are still underneath us. We remember not the Almighty power that wrought wonders for our deliverance. "My people do not consider."

In the first trial of the faith of His disciples the Lord rebukes the wind and waves (life's circumstances), and in the second He makes use of their rage and fury as the very medium by which He manifests Himself in a new and miraculous manner.

"O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto Thee? or to Thy faithfulness round about Thee? Thou rulest the raging of the sea : when the waves thereof arise, Thou stillest them." (Psalm lxxxix. 8, 9.)

Therefore if Christ be in the boat into which He has called you to follow Him, be assured that you will reach the shore to which you are bound. And if He is not *seen* in it, yet He has commanded you to enter it, and you have obeyed Him. Trust Him *fully*, and believe that He is near you though as yet unseen ; then shall your faith grow exceedingly ; and it shall be a preparation to behold “greater things than these.”

Fear not, then, though the wind is contrary and the storm rages around you. Look not on the dark billows but as the chariot of His power ; nor believe that the wild waves can overwhelm the bark in which their Ruler has placed His own peculiar treasure.

Listen, watch, try your way by the word. Give Him your full confidence. Set your heart on the glory of God through Christ Jesus,—that is, set your hope and affections on Him supremely,—and sooner or later you will hear His voice and behold His beauty ; and if not here, then hereafter, you will acknowledge that every trial has been appointed for your advancement.

Let none of my readers take for granted that I have chosen the path in which it has pleased my Lord to place me. He has unmistakably called me to walk alone with Him, by circumstances, by

suffering, and repeated dealings with me, as well as by the inward consciousness that this is appointed me.

Do I commend the same path to another? Nay. It has been a cross to be carried for Him which *nature* could not choose, but which, notwithstanding my failure and my lack of simplicity, grace has sanctified. God in His exceeding love has permitted me to see how He has made use of His feeble follower, when obedient to His word, and with a heart open to the teaching of the Spirit.

On one occasion dear friends joined me on the Continent, desiring to be used of the Lord to my help and comfort, and in a time of weakness following a severe illness. The Searcher of hearts gathered and accepted the motive, but the service itself was not according to His will.

It had been distinctly shewn me that I must go to Italy, and this was impressed on my mind before it was suggested, and strongly advocated, by the physician who attended me.

My friends arrived, and I lingered, loth to leave them immediately on their arrival. I became rapidly worse, and was compelled now to hasten my departure, and they desired to accompany me.

We arrived in Italy, and proposed remaining in a sheltered town that was recommended to us for

the winter months. But an increasing sense of the loss of the smile of the Beloved, that had hitherto made darkness light before me, caused me to be "afraid."

Natural fear of paining those who had given up their own plans in hope of being a help to me kept me silent. I dreaded to say, "I must leave you, and go alone to a place that the Lord will show me." Yet this was evidently His meaning.]

I became worse. The mental distress which I suffered brought on an exhaustion as of death. I could exclaim with Job, "The days of affliction have taken hold upon me."

I strove in vain to pray. I turned to my Bible, hoping to find help and comfort; but the Good Physician does not heal a wound that has a canker in its midst. There must be first the knife and the blood,—and so I found no relief.

Still I looked to Him. Anything would be better than darkness and His silence. My mind was directed to the prophet Malachi. Slowly and carefully I pondered on every verse—nay, every word—beginning from the first chapter. When I arrived at the fifth and sixth verses, "And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, 'The Lord will be magnified from the border of Israel. A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master. If then I be

a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name.' And ye say, 'Wherein have we despised thy name?'" (Mal. i. 5, 6.) I saw myself in His light. I was mocking God in asking for peace, when I was not honouring Him as a Father, neither obeying Him as a Master. Like a two-edged sword was the word of the Lord to my soul, piercing to the dividing asunder of joints and marrow. "If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands towards Him, if iniquity be in thine hand put it far away;" and again, "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry."

Then I felt that though caprice and ingratitude might well appear to attach to me, by the most indulgent review of my actions by others, yet in this place I dare no longer stay. I was ready to sacrifice everything, the love and confidence of my friends on earth; but the loss of the smile of my Lord I could *not* sustain.

My friends would have telegraphed for a physician, but this I felt was useless. I had an inward assurance that I should be released from suffering that afternoon. Whether this would take place by death or otherwise I knew not.

It was even as I said. At the hour I had indicated I began to recover ; and from a deep sleep, in which I was comforted and restored, I awoke with the face of the Lord again towards His weak but willing child.

The following day I left with my servant ; and as I neared the place of my next sojourn I was conscious of increasing blessing in my soul.

I arrived at a large hotel, and from the scanty accommodation offered me I supposed that it was, as represented—"full." Great was my astonishment in the evening, when I descended to the table d'hôte, to find a small table spread for me alone in a large and magnificent saloon, lighted by one solitary lamp, and warmed by the faint flame of a wood fire recently ignited.

The rain poured in torrents ; the wind howled through the long corridors, and echoed through the solitary saloon, with its fresco paintings and gorgeous decorations. I did not feel lonely. I was able to look at the waves, and expect Jesus soon to appear in "another form." Enough. I knew that I waited there at His command.

At the close of my dinner a lady in deep mourning, enveloped in a mantle and shawl, entered the room. Supposing from her appearance that she had just arrived in that tempestuous weather, I

hastened to offer her the seat I had occupied, and stirred the pine wood into a cheerful blaze.

As the pale face of the stranger became lighted up by the kindling flame I was struck by the deep dejection of her countenance, that told of some recent sorrow, and I said in my heart, "Has she in her grief a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother? Does she know Jesus?"

She had not as I supposed just come off a journey; she had been some weeks in the hotel, and would have left three days previously, but had been unwillingly though necessarily delayed to the present time, and she was the only occupant of the hotel besides myself.

I had no thought of service when I spoke to her. It was the spontaneous desire to tell of Jesus—to speak of Him whose gracious pardon filled my heart with love; this was all that actuated me. So I spoke of Him.

Yes, she knew Him as her Saviour; but her sense of adoption was faint and uncertain, and not resting on the word of the Lord. "He that believeth *is* justified." "He that hath the Son *hath* life." (Acts xiii. 39; 1 John v. 12.)

She desired to follow Him and serve Him, but she lived as a trembling servant, and knew nothing of the freedom of the Father's house.

She was lately a widow, and now mourning an only child, a fair, promising daughter of seventeen, in the dawn of life's morning given to God. She had returned for the last time from the seminary where her education was completed, and the still youthful mother welcomed her companionship, to be no more interrupted ; both had awaited this day with impatience.

On the first evening of her return, with her arm clasped round the waist of her mother, and her blooming face pillowed on her breast, the young daughter told forth her happiness.

And then there was a long pause, as if some perplexing thought had entered her mind and shadowed the face that seemed to have known no cloud of care ; then she said slowly,

“Mother ! Are we Christians?”

“Yes,” replied the widow, a little startled at the earnest tone of the question, “Christians ! Yes, I hope so !”

“Then,” continued the daughter, “we do not live like Christians. We are just like other people. We take the same amusements, do the same things. If we are Christians, should we not live for Christ?”

These words from the lips of her child, who had never known the trials and sorrows of her own life, awakened in the mother new views of a future,

which she had imagined was to be one of social enjoyment and cultivated talents. Mother and daughter took counsel together how Christians could serve Christ, and both personally desired to know how this new life could be lived.

They had not long to wait to learn the way of God more perfectly. Fever broke out in the neighbourhood, and the widow's only child was one of the first to sicken and fade.

It was the messenger of the Lord to prepare the way before Him. Six long anxious weeks of hope and fear passed by for the mother, marked by an amount of heaven-taught wisdom in the child that I never before traced in one of her years,—so much of the trial and temptation more common to riper age was comprised in her experience. The Lord was moulding and maturing the young spirit for its eternal home.

“I only wish to live to serve Christ!” was the expression on her lips, whenever a dawn of hope brightened the heart of those who watched beside her. And the Lord heard it.

A lady left her own family of five children to help the mother to nurse her only child; and when remonstrated with on the danger and cruelty of incurring the risk of infection to her children, she meekly replied that she had obeyed the Lord

in coming, and she trusted her children to His care, who had bade her leave all to Him. Her family and herself were preserved from the fever, and her eldest son was converted through the words of the young disciple "whom Jesus loved." Two young companions from the seminary she had left, a near relation and the nurse of her infancy, a Romanist, were the fruits of this life *seen*.

A physician of great eminence, who was also a friend of her family, was called in to see her. She enquired of him if he thought she would recover. He replied that most assuredly she would. On which she reproved him with a sternness which startled him, telling him that he knew the falsehood that he had spoken; and with a power and clearness that came from the Holy Spirit's teaching alone, she set before him the Saviour whom he rejected, and the wisdom and power of God which he despised.

During these six weeks this girl of seventeen, so little instructed in the things of God, but with a heart that longed to serve Him, lay down upon a bed of fever and suffering to accomplish the desire of her heart in ways she knew not, and died to live with and serve Christ for ever, where neither tears nor death can come.

Upon her tomb her last words are inscribed :
“I only desire to live to serve Christ.” Dear reader, is this your desire? The words recalled to my mind another “child minister,”* now with Jesus, and I listened and wept with the childless mother’s grief.

That evening, more than usually depressed and unable to find comfort, she had left her solitary apartment, where she ordinarily partook of her meals alone. She heard that there was only one lady in the public room, and she felt it would be less oppressive to change the place than to brood over the sorrow that in this deep loneliness awakened the remembrance of her loss.

The words of her child were ever ringing in her heart, and she showed me an extract from an old writer that had come under her notice, which she had written on the fly-leaf of her Bible : “He who *would not compass the world* to save a soul is not worthy the name of Christian.” I was silent ; but my heart responded, “Here *I* am ; send me.”

Blessed be the God of my mercies, His grace had made me willing to go wherever He would, if I might only comfort one of His little ones for Him, or point out the Refuge to the lost.

* “The Child Minister. Records of a Young Life.”
London : Morgan, Chase, and Scott.

Evening had far advanced before we separated, and it was only to meet again on the following day. It was my joy and delight to encourage her to lay hold of the treasures "laid up" *for her* in Christ Jesus, as she unburdened her heart of its grief. She dwelt in wonder on the tenderness of God, in taking heed of her great loneliness and bitterness of spirit. She recognised me as "sent" of Him.

And now my kind friends arrived. Looking at circumstances an observer might have said, "The purpose for which you were brought here being now accomplished, you can clearly accompany them to the place to which you are alike bound."

The struggle began again, but it was of short duration. I remembered former things, and only desired that the will of the Lord should be done, and I was able to cast myself unreservedly on Him. I passed a sleepless night, and was otherwise too suffering to travel; so they proceeded on their journey without me.

The hotel now began to fill, and in the affection and sympathy of some, never to be forgotten, I had new causes of thankfulness that I had obeyed the will of the Lord.

The weather continued most tempestuous, and even travellers who were prepared with tickets for

the sea voyage forfeited them rather than face the storms, and proceeded by land.

Although strongly persuaded to do the same, I felt, after I had prayerfully taken my ticket, that it was my *way* to proceed. I knew *who* ruled the waves and winds, and that He would not have permitted me to go thus far desiring only to do *His* will, and then to mistake His mind.

The sea was calm, and I praised Him for it; and the moon shone on the waters clear and bright, as seated in the little boat which was to convey me to the vessel, we steered among the craft of all nations that crowded the port.

The sense of peace and safety that filled my heart I have no words to tell. Jesus had not left me alone. But scarcely were we an hour out of the harbour ere a great storm arose, and I lay down to suffer, and continued in my berth until noon the following day.

Then it seemed to me that I must go above. I went into the saloon, though without any idea of remaining to dinner. I however felt constrained to take my place at the table. Dinner had proceeded for a short time, when my attention was arrested by an Englishman, who, with his bride and some members of her family, was seated on the opposite side at the head of the table. He

was drawing amusement for the listeners from the Word of God.

And I spoke for my Master.

There was a pause in eating and speaking. Every eye was fixed on me in amazement and scorn, but I heeded it not. He retorted rudely. I only heard the jeer and the laughter which had been called forth by the ridicule he had awakened on the instrument that by the Holy Spirit was given as a revelation of God to make man wise unto salvation ; and so I told him.

Doubtless, some will say, it would have been wiser to have kept silence, and prayed for him.

Nay, it was no time for silence when the Lord had placed me there for testimony.

When that testimony was given I had no more bodily strength left ; so that when dinner was ended I could with difficulty push my chair from the table to a corner near the door, and wait for the cold sea-breeze to revive me, and enable me to descend to my cabin. The Lord had guided all.

The Englishman would have passed through the doorway to the deck, but his hat and cloak had been placed on the console before which my chair was closely drawn. He paused before me, looking still ruffled. I arose from my seat to enable him

to reach his hat, and expressed my regret that I had been compelled to rebuke him before others, but that it was my Master's truth that he had assailed with ridicule.

He who aforetime said unto the tempest "*Peace, be still,*" ruled the strong man's heart. Others gathered round, although I spoke in a low tone. He listened, and unabashed before observers and listeners he frankly held forth his hand, in which I placed my own, as he said, "I thank you; I respect you for what you have done. I shall never forget this day. What will you say to me when I tell you I am a Christian?" "At least," he added sadly, "a professing Christian."

My work was done. I retired to my berth, and there I realized what Paul meant when he wrote, "The Lord stood by me and strengthened me." That night I had meat to eat that the *world* knows not of.

On the horizon Vesuvius shone like a pillar of fire, and I pictured the light that led the Israelites through their wilderness journey. To my soul it had a speech and language. I realized the same presence and the same power.

We were too late to enter the harbour, and remained at anchor until the morning. The moon shone in its silver glory upon the dark purple

waves, and a few stars studded a cloudless heaven. The burning mountain, with its fiery cone, became brighter in the deepening darkness, and streams of red lava were visibly flowing from its crater. I little imagined how and whence I should first behold an eruption of Vesuvius.


Naples lay around the beautiful bay, with lights flashing from palazza and tower. The only sound that broke the silence was the tramp of the watch upon the deck, and occasionally the low chanting song from some Italian fisher bark.

So the morning broke, and the stir of busy life began again upon the blue waters. But beyond that scene of earth's beauty my heart basked in the glory to which earth's glory is nought. Like the travailing woman, I had forgotten all my sorrow for joy that the Man Christ Jesus was born into the world.



MELIORA.

“The disciple is not above his Master, but every one shall be perfected as his Master.” (See margin.)—LUKE vi. 40.

 HE wilderness way I wandered
 Had many a valley and hill ;
 When I heard a song in the silence :
 Its melody lingereth still.
 It breathed o'er my sinking spirit—
 “Meliora ! Child, look up !
Follow thy Master's footsteps ;
Drink of thy Master's cup.”

Sadly I smiled as I answered—
 “How can I follow Him now ?
 The light is gone from the mountain,
 And wildly the night-winds blow.
 I wield no sword for our Leader ;
 No banner my weak hands hold :
 I but clasp it close to my bosom,
 And hide in its crimson fold.”

“Droop not to-day. Meliora !
 Drink of the chalice *He* fills :
 Grace is laid up for the weakest,
 Strength for the service *He* wills.
 ‘*All things are yours ;*’ yea, the glory,
 The darkness, the desert, to-day ;
 And He who hath trod it before you
 Hath hallowed thy toilsome way.

“ Fight ’gainst the power of evil ;
Up to the girded race !
Each hath a charge in the temple,
All in the kingdom a place.
Wait where thy Master hath called thee,
Patiently suffer His will ;
Enough, oh, enough if He bade thee
Be silent, and helpless, and still.

“ Brave hearts fall in the battle,
The race and the chaplet won ;
And some with the standard flying
Must rally the ranks alone ;
Some lie on the wayside wounded,
And some with their Leader rest.
Who doeth the will of the Father
Serveth the Master best.

“ So keep thy watch at the portal ;
The Master hath bid thee *wait*,
And speak the word that He gives thee,
As wanderers pass the gate.
When the sneer of the scoffer moves thee,
Meliora ! Child, look up !
Follow thy Master’s footsteps ;
Drink of thy Master’s cup.

“ A vessel meet for His service
The Potter must frame and mould ;
There’s the fining pot for the silver,
And the furnace flame for the gold :
But One watches o’er the fire—
A watch that thou *canst not* share ;
Look up ! Look up ! Meliora !
The Lord whom thou lov’st is there.”

Over the world's wide waters
The dove could her message bring;
And still at our curtained casement,
A minstrel waits to sing.
There's many a bird at the threshold
Who bringeth a song in the night;
And we praise the love that hath lent him,
As we follow his upward flight.

Thus often my night-watch keeping,
In hours with sadness fraught,
Sweet words to my drooping spirit
Have the billows of ocean brought.
Greetings from heavenly kindred,
I never on earth shall see,
And blessings from friends long parted,
Are songs like my bird's to me.

And low they sing, "Meliora !
The journey is shortening home ;
To-night we are nearer the Glory,
And brighter the days to come.
Secure in the arms that bear thee,
Meliora ! Take thy rest ;
Who doeth the will of the Father
Serveth the Master best."

NOTE.—The key-note of this song was struck in a time of heaviness of heart, through not understanding a peculiar dispensation of the Lord. The sleepless hours of the morning twilight were cheered by the plaintive note of a bird, that took its station on the window of my chamber, which looked towards the east. The note seemed distinct to my ear, "Meliora ! Meliora !" and I thanked God, and took courage.

I never saw my welcome visitor until the last day of my sojourn at that place, when, rising early, I looked for the last time on a spot which had been appointed as a school of discipline. A little bird alighted on the threshold of my window, and though I did not then hear his voice, I doubted not that it was my tiny preacher. Blessed be God "who giveth songs in the night."



CHAPTER VIII.

THE TREASURES OF DARKNESS.

“She turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.”—JOHN XX. 14.

“Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses.”—ISA. xlv. 8.



IN watching the first pruning of the vine in Italy, in a time of sharp proving myself, I was much moved at the manner thereof, differing as it does from that of France and of Switzerland. The vine-dresser unloosed its long, graceful branches from the neighbouring trees, which its summer beauty had clothed as with festal wreaths, and where so late its abundant clusters of amber and purple grapes had repaid the husbandman for all his care. And now he spreads it with its denuded branches upon the cold clay field. Men might say, “It is a dead thing, of no account;” and so it was to all outward appearance. The vine-dresser took his place upon the ground, and used his keen sickle-shaped knife

upon every branch, which he drew to his knee, and pruned with the most minute care and tender handling. I watched the process till it was completed, and the branches replaced. The careful arrangement of the wood, although shorn of every appearance of life and beauty, told how dearly the vintner prized his vine. To him it was not a dead thing cast out of mind. He marked the undeveloped buds of promise which none else could perceive. He remembered the fruit already gathered, and looked forward to a richer harvest.

Our great Husbandman takes down His vine-branches to the ground for their winter pruning, that they may bring forth twenty, sixty, or an hundredfold. Yet is the tried one looking only to the present moment and crying, "All these things are against me!"

That apparent lifelessness because no activity, that sorrowful retrospection and desolation, is often the preparation for blessing. He has left us nothing in which we can boast: "That no flesh should glory in His presence." Past experiences, however jubilant, cannot help us here, but the same Object of faith remains; and He has said (and His word remains by an immutable decree that cannot be annulled), "All things work together for good to them that love God." (Rom.

viii. 28.) Think! Have you never been thus afflicted before, and found these days of patient waiting “afterwards” rich in heavenly treasures, because you recognised that the Hand of Love had done it all?

In some hour when you allowed the Holy Spirit to plead your need, have you not prayed for a deeper knowledge of the Lord Himself? Is He not dealing with you as with an upright soul, who had submitted to Him the choice of the means His wisdom ordains to grant your request.

Ah! you thought the answer would come in visible success in service, in some pleasurable emotions, in health and strength to proclaim the name of the Lord. “We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble.”

You have asked for a gift: He is emptying your hands to receive it, and you cry, “Has God forgotten to be gracious?” You have prayed to know more of the grace and glory of God as seen in the face of Jesus Christ, and *He has heard you.*

Peter could not follow his Lord either walking on the water, waiting in the garden, watching on the mountain, or standing in the judgment hall, until he had experimentally learnt more of himself and more of the Master’s wondrous love. It is

only through the same baptism that we can be witnesses for Him in the same path of suffering and glory.

Peter was eager to follow in the way his Lord had taken on the waves, and he manifested the weakness of his faith ; he was very active in service in the garden, and he manifested his rashness ; his love to his Master took him to the judgment hall, where his fearful heart led him to deny that he ever knew Him ! In every failure, in every need, Peter learned more of the abounding grace, and of that eternal faithfulness which prepared him as the chosen witness for the Lord he loved.

We are blind to the real uses of affliction, that so often cuts off the soul from all outward enjoyment of the visible, and shuts it up to the spiritual comprehension of the life in Christ.

What knoweth the multitude, or the carnal-minded, of those midnight Gethsemanes into which the soul enters in fellowship with Jesus ! And though we ourselves catch but a faint echo of our suffering Saviour's woe, still He saith, "What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light : and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetop." How often has He rather to say, "Could ye not watch with Me one hour?"

Faith here, as elsewhere, is the hand that appro-

priates all that belongs to it; and thus the lame "leap as the hart," and the tongue of the dumb sing. In much tribulation we alone learn Christ's sufficiency.

"He that cometh unto Me shall never hunger" (for He alone can satisfy); "and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst." Believing in Him we shall be drawing from Him continually, for every rising sin, for every oppressive shadow, for every perplexing circumstance. And as Jesus cannot be hid, "rivers of living waters" shall flow through the channels He has prepared in darkness and silence, and make us witnesses for Him.

This morning I entered a chamber with a southern aspect, and expected to find it bright in the sunlight that flooded the corridor. But all was dark; so dark that, as the door closed quickly behind me, I lost the sense of my position altogether. There were three doors, but I could not discover the one by which I had entered. The furniture seemed to strike me at every step, and impatience increased my embarrassment. Not knowing which way to go, I stood still. In that few minutes' waiting I read a lesson on my own path that I sorely needed. By degrees I became accustomed to the lack of light; the objects gradually became visible; so that my way to the window

at length appeared clear and distinct. The shutters were of solid material, but the slanting sunbeams found the slightest crevice a sufficient channel through which to fall upon my feet, and make light in my darkness. I left the room with the way clearer and my heart lighter,—with the lesson to him “that hath no light” to “trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.” (Isaiah l. 10.)

If the mere intellectual knowledge of the truths of God could bring us relief in these dark seasons it would soon ensnare us, and we should think “By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom ; for I am prudent.” Nay, for thus saith the Lord, “Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth ME !”

“The world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not,” and your brethren may not understand you or your calamity, but He who knows your soul in adversity bids you “consider.” Thus God’s child will understand the Father, and know that the human *heart* of the Man Christ Jesus on the Father’s throne beats in tenderest sympathy with the least of His suffering members. Well may He say to us, “Do not ye *yet* understand?”

“The Lord hath not done without a cause all that He hath done.” Could a heavenly life be lived among the opposing elements of earth with-

out trial, how little would be realized the victory through the blood of the Lamb ! Life in Christ is a perpetual cultivation and extension of our possessions in the “exceeding good land ;” and every trial and triumph will increase our knowledge of *Him*.

How often in the first destruction of our plans and hopes we cry, “All these things are against me.” Nay, we *know* that *God* is for us ; and who then can be against us ?

Jacob knew not that he should find his treasure in the land to which he was going ; but we look on to our eternal rest in the light of revelation, and we know that,—though our Simeons and Josephs are gone, and Benjamin is gliding from our arms,—the chariot of the King will convey us hence, and that we shall find them in the home to which we are bound.

Joseph might well have said, “All these things are against me,” when he was cast into the pit, out of which he was drawn only to be sold as a slave. He could not discern what the Lord was working for him ; nor that he was thus prepared to stand second only to the King of Egypt, and sent forward to preserve the life of his father and his cruel brethren.

We do not understand the Lord’s designs for

us, nor the way. But we may know *Him*, His loving-kindness and tender mercy. In regard to chastening, in which all afflictions are too indiscriminately classed, I am inclined to think that with those who walk in fellowship with God it refers more immediately to the spiritual understanding rather than the external tribulation, or to the effect spiritually received through the dispensation.

If I am sick, shall I take it for granted that my health has been withdrawn because I have not used it in the service of Him who bestowed it? If I am proved with poverty, am I to understand that I have neglected the poor and needy? If I am bereaved of a cherished friend, a beloved child, am I to consider it a judgment for my fond affection?

Nay, I had been petitioning the Lord for a closer walk with Him; to know more of His heart of love; for patience, purity, and faith; for service for my suffering brethren; for opportunities of testimony for Him. Shall I esteem it punishment when He places me in a position the very opposite to what my natural understanding could have devised for the accomplishment of my desires? I do not say that a message of reproof may not have been thus conveyed: the object is to know "*What* saith the Lord?" in it.

Paul *knew* how to abound, and how to suffer want. The Lord saw good that he should lack that he might learn, and suffer that he might serve.

There are some sicknesses, for instance, in which a Father's tenderness is so manifested in drawing us away from the multitude to commune with Himself, that though the physical frame may suffer, we rest and comprehend many things for which we long ago importuned Him; the presence of the gracious Teacher making the solitude of the sick chamber as the mountains of Amana. How often such a season is the preparation for the next step to a deeper knowledge of that holiness which must be experimentally attained. Perhaps He may show us that He has thus drawn us away from dangers which we could not perceive until sheltered 'neath the covert of His wings. The trial may have for its object the perfecting of patient hope and deeper humility. Perhaps He has needed this sickness to bring some one nigh to us, that we may testify of the power of the Holy Spirit to sustain in times of weakness, suffering, and loneliness. Let us not limit God's dealings with us by thinking that they affect only ourselves. They may be for the church at large; they may be for unseen spiritual principalities and powers; they

may be for the kingdom of grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There are bereavements and disappointments in which the love of God may be so profoundly felt, that it is a clear testimony of what sustaining grace can do. On the other hand, there are diseases acting on the nervous system which are the severest tests of faith.

There are times when the mysterious nerves, so ready to respond to gladness, can only vibrate to the shadows that no one beside can discern ; while the causeless foreboding of anxiety calls forth powerless argument that cannot reach the heart, because it only springs from the head of him who offers it. Well may such exclaim with Job, "I also could speak as ye do : if your soul was in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you." Ah, dear friend, there was a needs-be for all, even for the empty words like tinkling cymbals, that you might turn to Him who bare our sicknesses, and whose sympathy never fails.

For the reception of some blessings there seems a necessity of suffering in the flesh. Who could reckon up such a catalogue of trial as the ambassador in bonds? yet who was more favoured with the continual manifestation of the Lord? (2 Cor. xi. xii.) And his experience may meet the many sor-

rowful complaints of sufferers: "I have no joy." No, dear sufferer, but you shall have it. There is the promised "afterward" (Heb. xii. 11), which remains for all the people of God; and Paul proved even this. "When we were come into Macedonia our flesh had no rest; but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the *coming of Titus*." So that Paul was cast down, and was comforted by one sent of God (2 Cor. vii. 6); but such must be *sent* of God.

There was a "needs-be" for the shipwreck (Acts xxvii.); there was a "needs-be" for the apostle of the Gentiles to spend three months at Melita. There were sick ones languishing there, ordained to health through the healing powers of the servant sent of God. His own faith was to be strengthened by the promise given by the Lord to His disciples being ratified to himself. (Mark xvi. 18.) He was to endure good report, and evil report; and the prisoner about to be brought before Cæsar had here to be honoured with many honours, that he might learn "all things are yours;" and that He who turneth the hearts of kings as a river of water, divideth to all men severally as He wills. It is good to note that the courteous reception of

the servant of the Lord, brought blessing to the house of his host, so that Paul was debtor to no man. (Acts xxviii.)

No; the Lord whom he served had not commanded calm seas and gentle breezes for His honoured servant; He had treasures in darkness for him, and hidden riches in secret places. Then "fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their reviling." "Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things," and He is leading the blind by a way he knows not.

Oftentimes an affliction has been sent to meet this unbelief of our heart in some secret dealing of the Lord with us, and to force it into the path of obedience. A beholder may mourn over his brother's calamity and see only darkness, while the sufferer himself is reading therein a lesson from which he is profiting.

Had Zacharias *believed* the word of the Lord, conveyed to him by angel-lips, he would not have been dumb. Immediately that faith had been manifested in obedience to the expressed will of God, his mouth was opened, and he praised the Lord for His marvellous dealings that had bestowed such honour upon His unbelieving servant. Testifying of the grace granted to his own family, he could prophesy of greater things to come. He

takes God at His word, and believes that his little infant son of eight days old shall be preserved to manhood, the prophet of the Highest, to go before the face of the Lord to prepare His way.

The emptying from one vessel to another is needful for the refining of the wine ; and the wisdom and sufficiency of grace "*laid up*" for us in Christ must be learnt through a change of position, in order more fully to exhibit the manifold action of the Spirit of grace. Then let us not deny the Lord we love, by distrusting His power. He who was with Joseph in the fire, and with Peter in prison, with Daniel in the lion's den, with John at Patmos, is with His own everywhere, at all times, even unto the end of the world.

God's ways with His own people hardly differ in the eyes of the world from those which are common to themselves. But when Saul was afflicted, it was in judgment ; when David was afflicted, it was to bring his sin to remembrance. When Saul enquired of the Lord, the Lord *answered him not*, and Saul betook himself to Satan's agents, familiar spirits (the spiritism of the present day). When David enquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him, revealing to him His righteous anger, and the sin which was put away. When Peter's sin came to remembrance, he "went out and wept bitterly;"

when Judas' sin arose before him, he went out and hanged himself.

We know that God has put our sins away by the sacrifice of His Son; and therefore He has *given* us peace, and has promised that He will never leave us—never forsake us. Let us rest on Him. Faith (that accepts the trial, the depth of which is gauged by God alone,) works out one of the eternal treasures only revealed in darkness. Men may behold it not. The Lord counts it "precious;" principalities and powers gaze on its growing brightness (Eph. iii. 10), and wonder at and adore the result of Christ's sacrifice, manifest in the flesh by the might of the indwelling Comforter.

"Have ye suffered so many things in vain; if it be yet in vain?"

I testify as one whose treasures have been found in darkness. Among many I record the following:

I was deeply interested in the spiritual state of one whose richly-gifted mind was given up to infidelity. On my first acquaintance with him the Lord in His great love had restored me to comparative health, so that I was enabled to speak of the truth that had made me free, and tell of Jesus, the wisdom and power of God. More than this,

He constrained the unwilling ear of the stranger to listen, though only to combat and scorn.

Suddenly I was again laid on my bed of sickness, unable to speak, and conscious that other influences would gather round my vacant place to disperse any wholesome effect that might have been wrought. I confess that I was bewildered by this sudden transition from service to silence; and "being afraid," I "wondered" what it meant.

Arguments which I might have set forth, in defence of truths that were undeniable, came up before me now I could no more use them; and the love of God as manifested in Christ seemed not half told, nor half His willingness to save, nor half His power. During night watches and morning watches the soul of the sceptic was before me, the object of my supplications and my *hope*.

One night it came to my mind, that though I could no longer speak for my Master, I could, by His help, write for Him. My head, weak from pain and sleeplessness, was clear to do His will; so I arose from my bed, and in the stillness of midnight our first arguments and the reflections that sprang from them were clearly brought before me, and I went over the former points again more minutely. I sent my letter; I looked for no reply; none came; and again I wrote.

Often through those long silent hours the taunt of the Enemy was heard—"It is all in vain;" and my faithless heart trembled to think the blessing I longed for was now lost to me. Oh, how often the night of unbelief hid Him whom I desired to follow, and I cried in the sadness of my soul—"Wherefore is it thus with me?" For, like Mary at the tomb, I "*knew not that it was Jesus.*" In that drear tempest came the still small voice—"Have faith, and doubt not." And He who calmed Mary's fears calmed mine. Shall a fig-tree wither at His word, and shall not a mountain of doubt be removed by the same Almighty power? Was not that precious soul more dear to God than to me, and could it be lost because I was sick?

My voice returned again; I took it as from the Lord; and though still very weak, I arose from my bed. The door the Lord had opened no man could shut, and the kindly greeting that met me from my opponent seemed given me from Him who knew the weak heart of His feeblest servant. I remarked that he looked weary and ill; and on asking him why it was so, he replied, "I was not in bed until the morning:" and then, after a pause, he added reluctantly, "I was translating your letters for the early mail. I have sent them to a friend who thinks as I do."

Then I looked back and "*saw Jesus standing,*" and knew that it was Jesus.

The dreary fallacy of "no God" crumbled and fell; yet that day passed, and many days, nay months, of hopes, and doubts, and prayer, rolled by, and still the carrier dove brought no message of blessing to my waiting soul. Yet faith strengthened by conflict. The Word of the living God was my beacon in every storm: "Have faith, and doubt not."

But the day came at last. My heart was overwhelmed with sadness; I was surrounded by strangers whose profession of Christianity was more terrible than the honest doubt of the infidel. My heart was vexed within me, and to the Lord I made my complaints: "Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?" "Why am I with Thine enemies?"

A messenger at my door aroused me from a night of weeping. He brought me a letter which had followed me for weeks on my journeyings; one word alone caused my song in the night, "*I believe!*"

Ah, then indeed I looked back and saw Jesus standing, and knew that it was Jesus!

* * * * *

"Let patience have her perfect work." "He that believeth shall not make haste." "When the time

was accomplished," the word of the Lord was proved; and "the set time being fully come" marks the events of the gospel, and remains still for the work of faith and labour of love. "*My* time is not yet come," is the voice of the Lord in many a delay. He would have us bring forth fruit before He comes to gather it.

"Do ye *now* believe?" He asks, when we rejoice in the return of prayer. The petition granted as soon as conceived sends us to His feet in the glow of grateful emotion, and like Peter we cry, 'I shall never doubt again.' We are sitting at His table with Him; we recognize the banner over us to be love (Song of Solomon i. 12, ii. 4), and we are strong in His realized presence; but if some day we follow Him afar off, and in our darkness and coldness we warm ourselves at His enemies' fire, no longer clinging to Him in good report and evil report, we are in the position to deny Him by not bearing the cross after Him, and the landmark of sorrowful retrospection is—Lost Blessing.

Sickness, desolation of soul, and outward afflictions, have all their treasures hidden in darkness, and we shall pass through them unblessed if we have not sought and found them. The last trial I would enumerate among them is temptation, apart

from them all. Are there treasures to be found here?

When the testimony of the Father's love had been manifested by the voice from heaven declaring, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," "Jesus was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." If *this* was *His* preparation for ministry, shall we fear that He will forsake His dear and tempted follower in the same path? Then think not "strange" the fiery trial that is to try you,—the answer it may be to the prayer, "Give me *understanding* that I may live." How often is this forgotten in the fiery trial of faith (more precious than gold) that works for us even here a foretaste of the "exceeding weight of glory." The furnace is hot, but the furnace is for fine gold, not for tin. It is corn that must be threshed, not poppies and thistles, however bright to the eye. And those who understand and know the Lord will believe that the Refiner's fire is of love, not of wrath, and will learn lessons therein that can be learned in no other place. In proportion as we understand Him shall we fight the good fight. We *know* WHOM we have *believed*. When Satan harasses us with sins forgiven and forgotten, and arrays them against us, we recall the love which delivered us from them, and realize

that the spotless Lamb bore our individual sins,—and not *sin* only; that He redeemed us from the life of nature which we lived before the grace of God was revealed in us; and atoned for the sin of to-day, which the Adversary depicts in yet darker hues.

The peculiar forms of temptation, varying as they do with every temperament and position and need of a child of God, cannot be defined separately; yet I confidently believe that if “they that feared the Lord, and thought upon His Name, spake often one to another” of their separate walks and conflicts, the spiritual sympathy which is so frequently lacking might be awakened and realized. We are exhorted to bear one another’s burdens, and to “pray one for another;” and never is a soul more prepared for this tender office of love than when sharing a brother’s trial, from which he himself has been delivered. (1 Cor. x. 13.)

In every phase of temptation we may learn more of Him “who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin,” and *know* that “He is able to succour them that are tempted.” (Heb. ii. 18.) The aim of Satan is to interrupt the fellowship of the soul with Jesus,—it may be outwardly through the senses, or inwardly by his secret assaults; but the saints will overcome from

the first to the last "by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony." There are some encounters wherein Christ seems to fight for us, and others wherein He overcomes by us.

I have a vivid remembrance of a season of fiery temptation in my early walk of faith. For weeks I never approached the mercy-seat without Satan standing by to resist me. Long and fruitless were *my* efforts to overcome, for I had not learned that faith alone can save. One day I knelt as before in bitter anguish, and in hopeless despair I cried,

"The same misery ! The same temptation !"

Then sweet, and strong, and clear as the voice of many waters (Rev. xiv. 2) came the word of the Lord,

"And the same Christ !"

Dear reader, I leave it with you, with the words of a faithful follower of the Lord, "Forward ! and overcome in the strength of Him who never lost a battle !"

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Rom. viii. 35.) Who shall rob us of our treasures in secret places? What shall hinder our fellowship with the Father and the Son through the abiding Spirit? Nothing but unbelief.

O beloved ones, who tarry at Kadesh-barnea,

perplexed, and doubting whose you are, and whom ye serve,—oft-times entangled with the affairs of this world, and sometimes in bondage (2 Tim. ii. 4)—“God hath not given us the spirit of fear ; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” All things are freely given to us of Him. “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good : blessed is the man that trusteth in Him.” Learn for yourselves the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God. And, in living communion with a living Lord, let the Spirit of grace show forth “the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.” (Eph. iii. 9.)

Here only can we suffer for Christ. Here only can we endure scorn and reviling, with and for a crucified and living Saviour. Here we can testify of His sufficiency, and be witnesses for Him. Here we can gather treasures for Him which shall shine in the crown of His espousals, and tell to sinners of the unsearchable riches of Christ. The day is passing away, and there is much land to be possessed. “We are made poor by what we miss as well as by what we lose. A little more patience, a little more constancy, and to what might we not have attained—to what tender intimacy with

Christ, to what satisfying communications, what rest, what power, what freedom !”

Only “the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God;” but there are many who make profession of Christian faith, yet live as if “the Lord had forsaken the earth, and the Lord seeth not.” (Ezek. ix. 9.)

Satan offers forms and ceremonies to those he would rock to sleep, and who are seeking something that they feel they need; and if the enemy can satisfy them with external and superstitious reverence for men and things, he keeps them in “the iron furnace of Egypt.” For those who see the beauty of morality, he presents stoicism in place of childlike submission; and asceticism (which is the worship of idol-self) for loving obedience to a tender Father and fellowship in the Holy Spirit.

“If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” (Rom. viii. 9.)

Look well to it, ye who put anything in the place of the living God. However the heart may be affected with religious emotions, however it may find a certain pleasure in hearing or reading of the things of God, if the soul has experienced no change from the darkness of nature to the light of life in Christ Jesus, ye are still in your

sins and the bondage of death. Whatever you are, if the soul has known no thirst after personal holiness, and you are content to live as the world, with the world's pleasures and wages (1 John ii. 15), distrust your position altogether. No Sabbath-keeping of Jewish rigour, no alms-giving of moral beneficence, no ceremonial rites nor priestly intercession, can give it you. It is the life of faith in the Son of God that can alone bring the knowledge of Him.

It is true, that if you know not yourself to be justified by faith, you have no assurance that you are joint-heir with Christ, without which you cannot take the present possession of the inheritance which the Lord our God hath given to them that believe. Oh, be not ye like unto the Israelites who died in the wilderness ! Take from the pierced hand of Him who cannot lie the covenant of peace which He hath sealed with His own blood, and "be not faithless, but believing."



HEAVENLY TREASURES.

“All things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee.”

1 CHRON. xxix. 14.

“They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels.”—MAL. iii. 17.



LEAVE Thee, Lord, my jewels,
 Though they are scattered wide;
 Have them in Thy close keeping,
 Safe by Thy wounded side.

Thine eyes can still behold them,
 Their place no more I see;
 No watch can I keep o'er them,
 Oh, watch o'er them for me!

They are Thine own: I would not
 Adorn myself with them;
 Thou hast ordained their beauty
 To grace Thy diadem.

Thy love awhile hath granted
 These “stones of grace” to me,
 And now I leave my treasure
 In trust, O Lord, with Thee.

For some I long time travailed
 With many a hope and fear,
 And marked them growing brighter
 With each succeeding year.

THE LOST BLESSING.

And some are freshly gathered
From the dark pit and the mine,
By the ensign of Thy power,
In Thy kingly crown to shine.

Fairer than Zion's mountain
The Eastern Sun hath kissed,
Shines in its modest beauty
Thy purple Amethyst.

By dust of earth encumbered,
None prized the precious stone ;
Christ looked on it, and loved it,—
How fair His gem hath grown !

Here's an Emerald from the valley
That suffering endears ;
The dearer for the darkness,
And the waiting, and the tears.

A Diamond from the desert,
When I watched there alone ;
And a Sapphire,—the fairest,
Because my latest one.

There, where storms raged around us,
And clouds rolled o'er my head,
I found a rosy Ruby
Within its sandy bed.

And now it shines in glory ;
More beauteous in Thy sight
Than the golden orb of morning,
In its radiant car of light.

Here's an Onyx. But I leave them,
 My eyes with tears o'erflow,
 My heart in love yearns o'er them,
 As Thou alone canst know.

In faith, and with thanksgiving,
 My treasures, Lord, I cast
 Upon Thy care, believing
Their future from my past.

Thy hand alone can fashion
 Thy costly stones to shine,
 When Thou mak'st up Thy jewels,—
No longer mine, but Thine.







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